

WORLD STRUGGLE

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The working class can and must spread its struggles



No matter how militant the workers involved, no struggle can remain isolated in one sector

As we enter the second half of the decade our exploiters are telling us that there's no point in struggling. We say as well submit to the facts of life of the economic crisis. Meanwhile we can watch the spectacle of our leaders providing peace and shaking hands across the table while the clouds of the nuclear holocaust are looming. What's the point in fighting back when everything we read and see and hear tells us that we are powerless?

The terror and misery of capitalism in its death agony is real enough. But our exploiters know how to turn even the disintegration of their own system to their advantage, by representing it as a message of despair and impotence for the millions of the exploited and oppressed throughout the world. Why? Not because the bourgeoisie who control this system are simply sick or insane, even though they must of necessity express the sickness and insanity of a decadent system which murders millions through war, famine or the rampage of exploitation.

No, the bourgeoisie today is screaming so loudly that we, the working class, are powerless to affect events precisely because reality proves otherwise. Today, coming into the second half of the eighties, we are seeing the development

of powerful and important struggles of the workers, from the shipyards of Spain to the iron mines of Sweden, from the steel plants of the US to the gold mines of South Africa. We are seeing a wave of workers' resistance to capitalism's austerity and its repression slowly but inexorably gathering force across the whole planet. And it is this international resurgence of the class struggle, which already represents the most widespread wave of simultaneous struggles in the history of the workers' movement, that the bourgeoisie is most desperate to blot out if possible and if not to distort and deride, in order to hide the fact that today the proletariat is fighting back, is resisting, and that against this threat to its entire system the bourgeoisie is being driven to more and more desperate measures. For the working class, for humanity, there is a future, and that future rests in the present resurgence of workers' struggles.

The future, however, is far from assured. While the international resurgence of class struggle proves conclusively that there is indeed an alternative to capitalism and austerity of the capitalist system, this movement fundamentally represents a potential to destroy capitalism and create a classless human community. The potential must be turned into a reality. The workers' resistance to capitalism's austerity programmes today must be turned into a concerted offensive against capitalism itself tomorrow. This is not a utopian prospect but a process which is unfolding already in the present struggles. We are not just seeing the existence of immediate struggles, but the development of an historic struggle of the proletariat against its exploiters.

This process is of necessity not expressed in a clear and overt way, and the bourgeoisie does all it can to prevent each strike or demonstration as an isolated event, with specificities of sector, or, region or country which make it unique and entirely separate from every other similar manifestation of the working class's combativity faced with the common attacks of capital. But it is precisely these common attacks, denuded by the deepening crisis of the entire world economy, which reveal more and more clearly the common nature of the response by the workers and the ability of the workers to learn from their common experience. Through the violent struggles of the shipyard workers of Spain, the fiercely combative struggle of the miners in Britain and the mass strike movement in Denmark, we have seen the workers drawing the lessons of previous combats and spreading their own struggles as widely as possible to better defend themselves.

Such important struggles have been particularly significant experiences for the working class in seeing the need for extension: the massive move-

ment in Denmark, for example, by extending rapidly to many sectors, showed a recognition of the dangers of isolation which so seriously crippled the British miners' strike. But it is also important to affirm that this same potential in the struggle is present in all the movements of the working class to defend itself and its interests. More precisely, it is the simultaneity of all of these movements in the conditions of the present period which gives rise to the possibility of a unified struggle.

The struggles in Britain in the past few months concretise this perspective of extension. Following a summer which saw struggles in important sectors like the railways and the shipyards, we have seen a willingness of workers to mobilise in defence of their immediate interests; workers in the car plants, the steel industry, in the post office and on the buses, and recently in the print industry at *The Mirror*.

While the bourgeoisie in Britain has tried to smother the workers' struggles under a blanket of demoralisation after the defeat of the miners' strike, the reality is a slow, uneven but untastable maturation of the conditions for extension. We are seeing workers in a whole array of different sectors prepared to defend themselves.

In many cases workers succeed in spreading their struggle within their own sector, gaining the active solidarity of other workers. But for the potential of extension to be fully expressed - for the workers to be really powerful enough to resist even temporarily the bourgeoisie's ravages - the struggle must spread beyond the well-entrenched divisions between sectors of workers who are already under a unified attack by the capitalist class, to go beyond such divisions which serve only capital's interests and to unify at a higher, conscious level.

The unification of the struggles is on the agenda for the working class today, and it is the vital task of revolutionaries to intervene in these struggles, to point to this very real perspective towards extension against all the false perspectives of the bourgeoisie.

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Unemployed struggle is a political struggle..... | 2 |
| Unions and bosses unite to cut jobs..... | 2 |
| Anglo-Irish Accord: Terror and Lies continue..... | 3 |
| International Class Struggle..... | 4 |
| British Economy going down the drain..... | 5 |
| Sixth Congress of the ICC..... | 6 |
| Wildcat tail ends the riots..... | 7 |
| Peace Talks to disarm the working class..... | 8 |

Liverpool council: leftism derails the class struggle

Today the bourgeoisie in Britain is making a huge propaganda campaign over the 'sell out' of the leftist-led Liverpool Council and the activities of the Trotskyist Militant Tendency inside the Labour Party. This campaign has the aim of demobilising the working class and preventing it from defending its own interests and living conditions. It attacks the class in two ways: - first, the left in Liverpool calls on the class to struggle - but for a defence of the local state machine and the Labour Party which runs it for capitalism. Workers are told that the only way to resist unemployment and the slashing of the minimal services of the 'welfare state' is to

rally behind the same state and the same party which carry out these attacks; - then, when the left 'reluctantly' caves in to the demands of the government after threatening thousands of redundancies, the righting of the bourgeoisie and the media, aided by the Labour Party leadership, scream about the uselessness of such a struggle. By whipping up a hysteria against Militant demons, the bourgeoisie does its best not only to cover the tracks of these bureaucrats and bosses but also vilify the whole idea of a struggle for socialism and the name of marxism. In this way the bourgeoisie, spearheaded by the left, has taken advantage of the workers'

very real suspicion of the left's manoeuvrings, and its hesitation in the face of capital's fiercest attacks, in order to run home its message that all resistance to the crisis is useless, and that socialism is a racket or a utopia. For revolutionaries, the 'fiasco' of Liverpool not only proves once again the reactionary capitalist role of the left, but also that, confronted by such attacks, the working class must turn its passive suspicion of the left and its uncertainty about the aims of its struggle into an active defence of its own interests against all its exploiters, right and left.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE UNEMPLOYED IS A POLITICAL STRUGGLE

In the South-East of England alone, there are at least forty separate unemployed or 'claimants' groups, loosely linked by the London and South-East Unwaged Federation (LASUEF). At a recent Federation meeting, there were representatives of groups from the Midlands (Birmingham and Nottingham), with news of a forthcoming meeting of groups in the north of England. Together with groups adhering to the old Claimants Unions which were active in the seventies, and groups such as RASUEF (Homeless Against Social Security Lodging Limits) formed to fight around single issues, there is evidence of a considerable and growing informal network of unemployed organisations in Britain.

The growth of such groups over the past five years, their efforts to overcome the isolation imposed upon unemployed workers and those who've never had the 'privilege' of being exploited by capitalists, and their attempts to actively resist the attacks of the capitalist state, are an undeniable reflection of the centrality of unemployment as the issue determining the evolution of the present international resurgence of class struggle.

This milieu of the unemployed is distinguished from those groups created by, or adhering closely to the trade unions and local trades councils - groups created precisely to prevent the self-organisation and development of unemployed workers' struggles - by their tendency to reject not only the police and the Tory Party, but the Labour Party and unions as well. This goes hand in hand, to a greater or lesser extent, with a perspective of not only fighting to resist the attacks of the state, but also of fighting to abolish the existing order of capitalist society: 'labour, conservatism and all the other parties of political party are the same - they want to govern us. They want to manage the system which pursues power, profit and property before peace and their needs ... Instead of a society where nothing is as it appears to be, we could have an open society where sharing and mutual aid replace greed and competition ... But we would have to fight for this. It will not be won through elections and politicians. It will take a worldwide social revolution to achieve this, which is probably a long way off. In the meantime we can learn and discover our strength by organising ourselves independently and fighting for immediate improvements' (leaflet by the Barnsbury (London) Claimants Union).

However, in the LASUEF such groups co-exist happily with other local committees such as overtly tied to the unions and Labour Party, whose pamphlets, leaflets and public meetings are essentially propaganda for the left apparatus of the capitalist state. In short, if the appearance and activity of these groups conceals the development of consciousness within the class, it also reflects the extreme heterogeneity of this development and the pressure of the dominant ideology.

THE 'FEAR OF POLITICS' AND THE UNWAGED GROUPS

The unemployed groups are not political groups and correctly don't see themselves as such. Membership is open to anyone who is unemployed, 'unwaged' or dependent on state benefits.

But this necessary refusal to become tied to any one particular political expression is all too often translated into a tendency to oppose any political discussion, which is not at all the same thing. This fear of politics was well illustrated at a meeting in London of the LASUEF in November. The meeting, which was attended by around forty people representing over a dozen assorted unemployed groups and individuals, as well as the ICC, showed how the refusal to discuss political issues threatens to undermine what the groups see as their own raison d'être on a number of levels.

On the level of being 'independent organisations', through a tendency to refuse to confront - or even recognise the necessity to confront - political differences within and between themselves, this milieu opens itself up to being used by the capitalist state. As we've pointed out, already some groups are little more than mouthpieces for the Labour Party - hardly an 'independent' existence!

At the LASUEF meeting there was a refusal to clarify disagreements between the groups on the nature of the Labour Party, the TUC and unions in general, despite the fact that a clear majority of those present described how these organs sabotaged any attempt of the unemployed groups (which in general, are housed and financed by unions or trades councils) to act on their own initiative and oppose being used as cannon fodder in Labour Party or union campaigns.

If the meeting rejected a suggestion to appeal to Labour and the unions for more support - we can't now the illusion that Labour and the unions

defend us because they don't" as one Birmingham militant put it - it equally rejected the ICC's insistence on making a clear statement to other unemployed groups about the dangers represented by these organs of the capitalist state. The meeting refused to take a political position. It remained dumb on a vital question and avoided taking the views of the majority to their logical conclusions.

On the level of making an 'effective resistance' to the attacks on the capitalist state, the meeting preferred instead to concentrate on 'concrete practicalities' such as the success or otherwise of campaigns for fuel, or those opposing the presence of state 'snoopers'. Such campaigns, arising out of the immediate needs of the unemployed, are necessary. But it's impossible for them to be effective if the political questions are unresolved. If the trade unions and the Labour Party can be used by the working class, then why not enlist their help? This was indeed suggested on more than one occasion. Tying the unemployed to organs of the state is hardly making an 'effective resistance'.

Effective resistance demands the widest possible unity within the working class, which can only be founded on a political recognition that unemployment affects the class as a whole and thus demands links between the struggles of the employed and unemployed which, in reality are part of the same struggle. But the LASUEF meeting had a tendency to fixate on the 'problems' of the unemployed, to see themselves as a separate category with separate struggles. Employed workers, when they weren't described as 'passive', 'having it easy' or downright hostile, were only seen as 'supporters' of the unemployed in their struggles.

It was the ICC which pointed out that the most effective campaign waged by the LASUEF - those which attracted the widest support - were precisely those which consciously aimed to link up with workers still at the point of production: the strike by Hackney BHS workers against 'snoopers' last June, for example. Yet the meeting rejected the ICC's suggestion that future gatherings be open to employed as well as unemployed workers, the lack of a political recognition that the struggle of the employed and unemployed really is one struggle against the capitalist state can lead such groups into the ultimately sterile and reactionary conception of

(Continued on page 3)

UNIONS & BOSSES SET TO CUT JOBS

In the first week of November Robert Maxwell, owner of Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN), issued redundancy notices to all 6,000 staff saying that all workers would be sacked by 31 December and that printing would be transferred to an alternative printing site away from central London, where only two-thirds of the current workforce could be re-employed.

A bitter and angry work force was confronted by SOGAT '88 and the NGA, the two print unions, who promised to organise ballots for strike action. In a typically divisive union tactic SOGAT balloted its members two weeks later while NGA was still promising to do so. And after a resounding vote for strike action in which the NGA machine misleads came out alongside SOGAT voters, the unions terminated the strike after only 34 hours with both unions and management claiming satisfaction and success. In a clever joint operation, first Maxwell withdrew his dismissal notices and then SOGAT claimed victory and ended the strike. But the union also agreed to produce an alternative plan for cuts and job cuts by 10 December. In other words, the union is responding to take responsibility for the attack on the workers at MGN and if it gets away with shedding less than 2,000 of the workforce, it will claim a victory. A victory indeed for union-management engineered lay-offs.

This strategy of SOGAT is evidence of the general role of unions to ensure that management policy is carried out with a minimum of disruption. The unions will often simulate the anger and opposition of the class to the attacks of management but at the same time divert workers militancy into isolated dead-ends with no perspective for mounting a real fight against the bourgeoisie's attacks.

To take another example, NGA and SOGAT have already accepted the proposed closure of the MGT Thomson (City Grove plant) in Manchester but have mobilised the workforce for strike action

... against the level of redundancy payments! And they have merely taken soundings of the MGN workforce in Glasgow where the Scottish edition are printed. All this while calling on MGN workers in London to strike (although only for a day!) against redundancies. In reality all these workers must struggle together!

At MGN the union has adopted a traditional posture of harassing the discontent of the workforce for strike action and then postponing and arguing instead for further negotiations. In this way, the unions aim to convince the workers that there is a possibility of a reasonable accommodation being reached between management and workers over the rationalisation plans and to disguise the reality of the need for workers to take effective action in order to defend themselves against the continued attack of the capitalist system. By attempting to convince workers that it is impossible to mount effective opposition against redundancies and rationalisation plans, because of the isolation of the struggles, the unions hope to generate passivity inside the class. The unions do everything to prevent workers from establishing a balance of forces in their favour.

Recently the attacks in the newspaper industry have been further stepped up with the proposal of Eddie Shah (famous for his confrontation with printworkers at his Warrington printworks twelve months ago) of a new daily newspaper who utilises the most advanced new technology requiring only 360 production workers. The union has effectively endorsed Mr Shah's proposals and have allowed him to enter into a single union agreement with BEM and right-wing BEMU (electricians' union) which has established its credentials with a series of no-strike deals over recent years.

At the News International Group owned by Rupert Murdoch, SOGAT are making good progress over the introduction of new technology in exchange for a possible single union agreement and NGA have accepted in advance the principle of

single keying (which cuts out the composing room where traditional printing was done) for the production of a new London evening paper. The latest newspaper demanding concessions from its workforce is the Daily Telegraph which is using its claim to be on the verge of bankruptcy to support its case. The proposed 5 per cent technology deal for the year has been withdrawn and the unions are preparing very compliantly.

Two key points come out of all this. Firstly, clearly where widespread militancy exists not just within whole sectors such as the newspaper industry but throughout the class in general, the unions are concerned to hold back the workers and to obstruct the development of strikes for joint actions in defence of living standards.

Secondly, we have to say to workers that it is necessary to combat the union manoeuvre to divide us and divert our struggles. To recoil from the struggle in face of union promises to negotiate some reductions in the levels of redundancy or worsening conditions is to accept the attacks of the bourgeoisie from the union 'soft cop' rather than the management 'hard cop'.

The economic crisis dictates that the bourgeoisie has nothing to offer the class except further misery in the form of increased unemployment combined with attacks at the workplace. But for the present the unions have been capable of promoting a degree of passivity by exploiting the hesitations inside the class confronted by the immensity of the tasks before it. However the saturation of class consciousness is taking place as the movement of events oblige the unions to move and now demonstrate their anti-working class role in the face of the class struggle. This unshaking of the unions is the basis of the opening up of the perspective of the mass strike in our struggles to come.

UT

ANGLO-IRISH ACCORD: MORE TERROR, MORE LIES

"Why does the bourgeoisie go through these charades? Because if it were to do otherwise it would have to discard the mask of democracy, to admit that it had no solution to the problems of the working class in Ulster. In other words, the open activity of the army, the RUC, the Catholic and Protestant parties and paramilitary organisations - this reign of terror is the bourgeoisie's solution for Ulster." (IR 95, November 1982)

We said this three years ago in answer to the bourgeoisie's still-born Northern Ireland Agreement, and it is an assessment which applies equally to the latest charade: the Anglo-Irish Agreement between Thatcher and Garret FitzGerald.

The Agreement contains three basic elements:

- a consultative, though not executive, say of the Eirean government in the affairs of Northern Ireland;

- the recognition by Eire of the union between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom (!);
- joint cooperation between the repressive state machines of Northern Ireland and the South against the "gunmen".

There is hardly anything new in this 'accord'. The Eirean bourgeoisie is already 'consulted' by the British government on Northern Irish affairs, and Eire has in reality accepted the partition of Ireland for over sixty years. The armies and police forces of North and South already cooperate in the job of state repression. The Agreement is indeed another charade.

The real meaning of the Anglo-Irish Agreement will not be found in its stated aims and intentions, but with great fanfare in the media.

The hysterical reaction of the Ulster-royalist to the Agreement is part of the whole game. The Ulster Unionist parties mobilised 100,000 people in Belfast to denounce this toothless accord. Their MPs are resigning their seats in Westminster in order to mount a full-blown re-election campaign against Dublin having any say in Ulster. The Unionist bourgeoisie have threatened to make the province ungovernable. But this threat is just the predictable part of the whole ideological campaign.

The signing of the Agreement is another round in the phoney battle between the British Government and its allies in the western bloc - who are supposed to want peace, unity and harmony in Northern Ireland - and the sectarian bigots, whether it's the Paisleyites or the Gerry Adamses, who are determined to thrust them at every step.

In fact the Irish 'unity' which the unionists appear to hate and republicans appear to want so much, already exists in all but name. In terms of economic relationships, political rule and the repressive apparatus the reigns of power in Ireland are already held in Westminster, aided

SIXTH ICC CONGRESS

(Continued from page 8)

ing said: either a desire to retire from militant activity, or a profound calling into question of the political positions which the ICC has defended since its origins on the question of organisation, and which are contained in its platform, its statutes, and its basic texts on this question.

The perspectives adopted at this Congress insist that huge outbreaks of class struggle are necessary in the very conditions of the historic period in which we live. Within these outbreaks, the capacity of revolutionaries to form a real organisation of political combat is an indispensable condition for the development of the struggle towards the perspective of the world communist revolution. This is the objective of the International Communist Current.

(IR 77, 86)

UNEMPLOYED STRUGGLE

(Continued from page 8)

Their role as 'social workers' for the unemployed. Unemployment is not an individual affliction, but a consequence of the crisis of a bankrupt political and economic system.

On the level of broadening its influence and encouraging others to join or form their own

and supported by the central power structures of the Western bloc - the EEC, NATO etc, under the hegemony of US imperialism.

Far from desiring a solution to the 'mess' in the North, this mess is fuelled in the interests of the western bourgeoisie through the covert manipulation of its illegal paramilitary gangsters the IRA, UVF, etc, and its legal forces of repression the RUC and army, backed up by ideological campaigns, like the one around the Anglo-Irish Agreement. (!)

What the whole Western bourgeoisie fears in Northern Ireland is not sectarianism and bloodshed, which are of its own making. Its real fear is the threat of the working class struggle and the threat of its growing unity.

The proletarians of Ireland are among the poorest in Western Europe - with the worst housing and living conditions, and the most ferocious repression. Unemployment in Northern Ireland for example is over 20 percent. These conditions which, as elsewhere, are steadily deteriorating, are providing the objective basis for the workers to go beyond sectarian divisions and wage their own struggle.

The maintenance and stoking-up of sectarian divisions is one of the bourgeoisie's main efforts to smother this threat. The Anglo-Irish Agreement, which has succeeded in mobilising the Unionist bourgeoisie, and temporarily diverting the attention of the workers from the defence of their living standards, is another episode in the bourgeoisie's ideological and terror campaign against the potential class unity of the proletariat.

This potential is not a fantasy of revolutionaries, although it would seem that way, to judge from the selection of news by the media, for who the only struggle in Ireland is between Catholics and Protestants. In reality, over the past 15 years, in all the industrial centres of Ireland the working class has attempted to join the ranks of workers elsewhere in resisting the effects of the world economic crisis.

It's true of course that sectarian terror has taken its toll on the Irish proletariat which is in any case relatively small and dispersed. But these workers are not alone. Tens of millions of workers in Britain, in Western Europe and the rest of the world share the same interests and the same future.

Thus the campaigns of the bourgeoisie aren't merely directed against workers in the North, or even in Ireland as a whole, but against the whole Western European proletariat.

To make English, French or German workers believe that the main interest of workers in Ireland is to blow each other up is a powerful weapon against the necessary unity of workers everywhere.

But conversely, when Catholic and Protestant workers struggle together on a scale which can no longer be hidden by the bourgeois media, then workers elsewhere will be given a tremendous example in overcoming their own divisions.

This is the real danger which is behind the concerns of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and other charades.

IR

Notes

(1) In this context we have to correct an impression given in a previous article on the Ulster situation in IR 87, that the British bourgeoisie is in a way 'disengaging' from its role of Northern Ireland, or that its current strategy implies the removal of sectarian divisions within the working class.

Unemployed action groups, the meeting noted the relative inability of existing groups to attract new members. "People are interested by our campaigns and efforts, but on their particular problem is temporarily 'solved', they don't want to sustain a commitment to the wider issues" as one participant put it. But it's precisely because the groups tend to avoid any discussion of the 'wider issues' and prefer instead to concentrate on 'single-issue campaigns' that this problem is exacerbated.

In conclusion, we can say that the necessity for political discussion is to very contradict the autonomy or effectiveness of unemployed groups. On the contrary, it's the pre-condition for such autonomy and effectiveness. To insist on this indispensable link between theory and practice - this was the aim of the ICC's intervention as part of the meeting organised by the LABRUP, not as some alien political force outside and against the struggle.

KT

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HERES TO COMMUNISMO!

The first number of *Communisto*, half-yearly review published by the Alptram Communist Collective of Mexico appeared this summer. (!) It is an enormous step toward the existence of a regular instrument of Marxist intervention in Mexico. As they put it themselves in their editorial: "the publication of *Communisto* is an indispensable form of intervention for the collective. With this publication we hope to create a vital place for the political expression of the proletariat, a place that hasn't existed up to the present."

This will to intervention in the proletariat is concretised by the content of the review, where a large place is given to the lessons to be drawn from the miners' strike in Britain, containing an introduction from the collective, followed by texts from the IMRP and the ICC.

The will to involve themselves in the international revolutionary milieu is also shown in the presence of an International Debate section which, in this issue, is devoted to a polemic with the IMRP on its conception of the 'reconstruction of the party'.

As the editorial rightly says: "Today more than ever the practical necessity exists for the rising movements to extend and generalise, breaking with all corporatism, affirming the necessity of an organised intervention of revolutionaries on an international scale, which poses the question of the bases of the political party of the proletariat. Greetings to *Communisto*!"

11 See International Review 40 and 41
Alptram: Apartado Postal 21-984 CP 4000 Mexico, DF

AP IS NOW A NEWSPAPER!

The review *Accion Proletaria*, organ of the ICC in Spain, is now produced as a newspaper. It is the response of revolutionaries to the developing needs of intervention in the third wave of class struggle. More than ever, in the current resurgence of class struggle internationally, it is necessary that the voice of revolutionaries be heard and that they participate in the development of class consciousness, showing what's at stake in the struggle and the obstacles the bourgeoisie put in the way of the proletariat. More than ever the press of militant communist organisations must directly intervene in the development of the proletarian movement. Greetings to *Accion Proletaria*!

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Central organ of the ICC

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- * Ideological campaigns of the bourgeoisie against the class struggle
- * Eastern bloc: both feet in the capitalist crisis
- * 1905 revolution: basic lessons for the proletariat
- * Reply to the CWI on the subterranean mutation of consciousness
- * Internal debate: opportunism and centrism in the working class and its organisations

NEXT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

No 44, 1st Quarter 1986

Will include Reports and Resolutions and a counter-Resolution from the Sixth ICC Congress. Also: Salute to *Communisto*. And: From Limerick to Kington

With: Analysis of the developing class struggle.

REPORT ON CLASS STRUGGLE

After a reflux in the struggles of the working class following the defeat of the mass strike in Poland of 1980, the strike by several thousand public sector workers in Belgium in September 1983 announced the beginning of a resurgence of struggle against capitalism's attacks. Despite a slow and difficult development this wave of struggle has involved workers across the world, and particularly the powerful battalions of the working class in Western Europe. This has included workers in countries supposedly marked out for "social calm" like Scandinavia and West Germany, workers in countries with so-called "socialist" governments like France and Spain, and workers in the famine, debt and war-ridden "Third World" where the proletariat is only a small fraction of the population.

These struggles have been marked by:

- a tendency for movements to develop spontaneously, and particularly at the start, a tendency toward escaping the unions (Belgium '83, SNCF (the French railways) in September '83...)
- a tendency for a massive involvement of workers (500,000 in Denmark, 600,000 in Brazil in November '83)
- a tendency towards the extension of the struggle with workers organising it for themselves (general assemblies in Spain with postal workers and agricultural workers, possibilities of extension in Britain when the strikes of dockers in the summer and car workers in the autumn of 1984 happened during the miners strike, meetings held by workers of different factories and the unemployed in Denmark...)
- Most important, after two years of struggles, is the continuing simultaneity of workers' actions. It is this that provides the basis for the future unification of struggles. And if we can't yet point to a range of struggles convulsing a country as those of the Polish workers did in 1980, then the struggles that follow in this article should not be viewed as a list of isolated events, but as moments in the development of one international wave of struggle by the working class.

HOLLAND

The Dutch ruling class was hoping that the effects of its austerity plans could be postponed until after next year's elections, but with increasing lay-offs at several factories and in several regions, all the "collective agreements" that the bourgeoisie had hoped would keep the lid on the social situation are proving to be just so many pieces of paper.

On 28 October workers of the Amsterdam fire-brigade started an occupation of the fire headquarters, demanding a higher bonus for the worsening of working conditions. This occupation spread to all the fire stations in Amsterdam with nearly all the workers involved, and spread to other towns in Holland. The most spectacular action was an attack on the Amsterdam town hall. Fire boats aimed high-power jets of water into the courtyard, breaking windows and flooding corridors and offices. Firemen then filled the ground floor with foam. Later when the town hall was invaded, demonstrators started fires throughout the building. The police held back. The firemen had shown their degree of respect for capital's laws and institutions. Despite such actions which can always be recuperated by the unions the main need of the struggle is to spread to other workers. The potential for such extension exists in the present situation.

On 11 October the Amsterdam tram drivers spontaneously went on strike against work speed-ups.

On 8 October a short strike broke out at a dock in the Rotterdam region against the lay-off of one worker who had refused to do the work he was ordered to.

On 23 October a spontaneous strike broke out against the "collective agreements" between unions and employers in the Rotterdam port. From one dock it spread to another, and when one dock went back to work another came out on strike. Although it was only a short-lived movement, the unrest continued.

Also in late October workers at a poultry-butcher in Utrecht went on strike to demand increases in the wages of non-Dutch workers. The employers gave way, as they have in a number of recent strikes in Holland.

Further recent strikes, squatters' revolts in Amsterdam and increasing unemployment are laying the basis for acute anxiety on behalf of the Dutch bourgeoisie. Its pacifist anti-Cruise missile campaign is aimed as a diversion from the

struggles of workers in defence of their deteriorating living conditions.

BELGIUM

It didn't take long for the true results of the recent elections in Belgium to be revealed: the class more widespread and brutal than at any time since the thirties. The government hadn't even been formed when the bourgeoisie started pulling out the plans they'd had up their sleeves for months: attacks on the workers in the form of massive lay-offs, new working conditions and further austerity plans.

But the threats of the ruling class were met by the proletariat. For example, the possibility of 3790 sackings in the mines in Limbourg was met with the spontaneous strike of those workers affected. Within a week, 18,000 miners had joined the movement in solidarity with the strikers. The government tried to get a return to work, with a promise of a 24 hour strike to come. Last year the Limbourg miners, in a previous strike, sought out the solidarity of workers at Phillips in Hasselt and Ford-Genk; this year the unions tried to stop this at any price to avoid a social explosion, with the risk of the unification of struggle from different sectors.

When the management announced a "report of decisions" the union presented it as a "great victory" and tried to use it as the basis for a return to work. If eventually the manoeuvres of the unions achieved a resumption of work, the workers' combativity and anger remain intact, and the experience of the blood push on the push to extension will not be forgotten.

The strike on the Belgian railways also showed the possibility for the extension of struggles. This was in response to a staggering tax on night time rates of pay of 43% retroactive to 1982!

The news of this plan spontaneously brought out railway workers in Brussels, quickly spreading to all the main stations. The unions tried to stop the movement by saying it was all a provocation but arguments about elections and the left didn't affect the workers. In a short time the "Brussels strike" had reached Liege, Charleroi, Courtrai, Ghent, Antwerp, Ostend... tens of thousands of workers were on strike and traffic almost entirely paralysed. Although only a short-lived strike limited to one sector it showed the possibilities for a rapid extension of the struggle. The strikers were without illusion and still angry that they had been forced to abandon a struggle that couldn't be continued in isolation. The fact that bus drivers in Brussels and Antwerp had spontaneously gone on strike was no accident but showed the concrete possibilities for a future uniting of struggles.

SWEDEN

Among a number of recent strikes in Sweden there have been two in particular which demonstrate not only combativity but also the developing awareness of the sabotaging role of the unions. Involving women as they did, the feminist tie of women's particular interests was also knocked on the head.

In Borlänge (300km north west of Stockholm) there was a four-week strike of cleaning women at a steel factory. What started as a protest against deteriorating working conditions soon posed the question of the unions' role. Indeed the struggle. Although they were quickly isolated by the manoeuvres of leftists and the unions, the striking women organised their own assemblies and picket lines. This development was clearly connected with previous strikes by these workers in 1974 and 84.

Another strike in early November involved women who provided day care for others' children, employed by local authorities. One of the conditions in a new union deal was a reduction in pay if ever children are sick. Effectively this could mean a wage reduction of 20% or more in the case of "normal" children's diseases. This strike of some three weeks involved thousands of "day-care-hers". The co-ordination of the strike and the preparation of a demonstration were all completely out of the unions' hands. Indeed the unions said the whole thing was illegal and individually threatened many workers, trying to stop them joining the main demonstration.

Despite this, tens of thousands of women workers demonstrated all over the country. In the Stockholm demonstration speakers who upheld the strength and combativity of the struggle were met

by ovals, while a speaker who supported the "union way of negotiations" was met with silence. Among the placards were slogans such as "The support from the union is our death", "The union deceives us", "The union on which side?", and "Sick children = starvation". These slogans are distinctive; they are also representative of a mood among workers in Sweden which comes up against not only the unions but also a "socialist" government.

USA

We have referred before to the Wheeling-Pittsburgh steel strike which involved more than 8200 workers in nine plants located in three states. This finally came to an end in late October, after three months' struggle. The unions agreed to a package of wage and benefits cuts with already below-average wage rates being cut by 16%. For a detailed analysis of this strike, written while it was still under way, read Internationalism 47, publication of the ICC in the USSR, where we show its strengths and significance.

- it is the clearest, most dramatic instance of the rejection of concession demands and the associated bourgeois ideological ploy.

- it is the clearest refusal of workers to be diverted from defending their class interest by the fear of unemployment.

- it is a strike in a basic industry, located in the industrial Midwest, a region hard hit by economic crisis and boasting a tremendously significant concentration of industrial workers.

Although the steel industry has been particularly hard hit by the crisis, the steel strikes in France and Britain in 1979 and 1980 showing clearly the response of the class under attack in this sector, the Wheeling-Pittsburgh strike was in no way an isolated phenomenon in the US. In Bath, Maine, shipyard workers were on strike all summer against management demands for concessions. At the Hormel meat-packing plant in Austin, Minnesota, workers struck in August rejecting concession demands and insisting on the restoration of wages out last winter. Mass picketing begun by the workers at the start of the strike was curtailed by the union through its touting of "solidarity" demonstrations in Minneapolis.

In the haulage industry drivers who transport new cars from factories to car dealers went on strike against changes in conditions during the summer. Striking drivers threw up picket lines at car plants, but the potential of this but arguments about elections and the left didn't affect the workers. In a short time the "Brussels strike" had reached Liege, Charleroi, Courtrai, Ghent, Antwerp, Ostend... tens of thousands of workers were on strike and traffic almost entirely paralysed. Although only a short-lived strike limited to one sector it showed the possibilities for a rapid extension of the struggle. The strikers were without illusion and still angry that they had been forced to abandon a struggle that couldn't be continued in isolation. The fact that bus drivers in Brussels and Antwerp had spontaneously gone on strike was no accident but showed the concrete possibilities for a future uniting of struggles.

These and many other examples show that more than at any other time in the last 20 years workers in the US are participating in an international class movement.

GREECE

In Greece the "socialist" government is trying to push home a filigree austerity programme. The unions, controlled by a stalinist and Socialist alliance, have agreed to protest - but only as a means of putting pressure on negotiations with the government. So, on 21 October there was a nationwide general strike, with only partial union backing, the most serious opposition in four years of the Papandreu government. A second general strike was called for 14 November. This was met with fierce police repression, including the shooting of a fifteen year old, killed as he threw fire bombs into a police bus. This led to riots in at least three cities and the occupation of Athens University. The demonstration was partly in commemoration of the 1973 resistance to military rule; for the Socialists to warn of the dangers of its restoration is an empty threat in the light of its own repression and austerity measures.

BRAZIL

Brazil's "new democracy" has been developing its own attacks against the working class, and for its pains has had the response of more than 400 strikes since the installation of the "new republic". After October's general strike in the transport sector, November brought a strike involving 800,000 workers in engineering, plastics, chemical and woodworking industries. Their demands were for a cut in the working week from 48 to 44 hours and real wage increases of 20 per cent over the rate of inflation which is 400 per cent. The President, Jose Sarney, said that since he took office in March there had been no need for economic austerity! Workers, however, have experienced the delights of Brazilian democracy.

DESCENT INTO THE ABYSS

Butting commodities of a decaying social system

THE MYTH OF 'RECOVERY'

According to Chancellor Nigel Lawson and an army of bourgeois propagandists, the British economy is now entering its fifth year of 'recovery' - the 'the longest lasting upswing for thirty years, with the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) averaging almost three per cent a year since 1981, double the pace in the rest of Europe'. (*The Economist*, 14.9.85).

But just a cursory examination of this 'healthy' British economy is enough to dispel the lies of the bourgeoisie.

The agricultural sector is convulsed by the 'global' crisis of over-production. British farmers are 'facing their biggest financial crisis since the war' (*The Guardian*, 10.9.85). In 1980 there were 50 farming 'failures' recorded; last year there were 155 and the trend is accelerating rapidly. British banks lent £5.4 billion to farmers last year and as EEC subsidies for milk and grain production dry up, both the farmers and the banks which keep them afloat are in deep trouble. As one manifestation of this, farmland prices have fallen on average around 20 per cent in one year. Feeding unsaleable butter to unsaleable cows - one 'solution' currently practised in Britain - is a gross caricature of capital's tendency to self-cannibalisation.

In the manufacturing sector, 'all the evidence suggests that investment has predominantly attempted to replace workers rather than increase output capacity'. (*Financial Times*, 10.9.85). In other words, industrialists have no confidence in 'recovery'; they are investing for the future by making redundancy payments, not goods to be sold.

Britain, once 'workshop of the world', now leads the way into a renewed recession in the face of the global over-production of commodities in relation to solvent demand: 90,000 jobs torn out of the industrial centre of Birmingham; layoffs for Austin Rover workers and the threat of redundancies at Ford where unaided cars clog the car-parks; attacks on wages and jobs even in the 'sunrise' oil and electronic industries.

The dramatic falls in manufacturing output are equalled by a fall in demand for raw and manufactured materials: 'the world is swarming with coal' as Coal Board boss Ian McGregor put it when he explained the reason for losing 70,000 more miners' jobs. The same is true for steel and tin, as exemplified in the recent collapse of the tin market and the suspension of share dealings in this commodity.

Attempts to artificially create demand through a massive flight into credit - and which has played an enormous strain on the financial sector, leading to spectacular banking failures (Goshon Mathew) and a fad for mergers amongst banks, building societies and large conglomerates. This tendency to 'rationalise' and centralise capital by the state - expressing the reality behind the rhetoric of 'privatisation' and the 'free market economy' - in no way represents a strengthening of the economy. On the contrary, it's the expression of its mortal crisis, the 'rationalisation' of larger and larger debts.

In the retail sector, apparently buoyant sales are based on a fantastic stringing of credit mechanisms, the concomitant of which is an ever-growing mountain of individual debt, again caricaturing the situation of capital at a global level where the only way commerce can continue in the face of chronic debts and bankruptcies is by resorting to - a further increase in debt. Thus last year in Britain, the average debt per household exceeded £1,000 for the first time in history. For larger and larger sectors of the

working class, the tragedy of debt expresses not an escape flight into the purchase of consumer durables, but a desperate fight against absolute pauperisation, against mortgage cancellations, evictions, the inability to pay fuel and food bills (1).

In comparison with its major industrial competitors, 'Britain's industrial performance continues to show little improvement ... profitability measured as a net rate of return on capital is still lower than that in Japan, West Germany, the US or France' (*Financial Times*, 10.9.85). Inflation is still historically high and has been rising relentlessly over the past eighteen months, despite a frantic 'massaging' of figures, to its current peak of just under seven per cent a year. Interest rates too are at historically high levels, which has in turn been financed by massive international borrowing by the British government in a bid to prevent a wholesale flight of capital towards the strongest pole of attraction, the US. By plugging, to an extent, this hole in the dyke, British capital has only succeeded in further reducing the competitiveness of British exports due to the over-inflated price of sterling.

But the most telling statistics - those that reveal the true reality behind the five consequent years of growth of GDP - are those which show that all this 'economic regeneration' has barely been able to raise the level of GDP to that achieved ... in 1970! All the so-called growth has merely been an unsuccessful attempt to get the British economy back to its parlous state before the world recession of 1980-2.

However, the propagandists are making so much of this sustained growth precisely in order to hide the fact that it's coming to an end, without having achieved even its limited objectives: 'Most of the 30 or so economic teams who are brave enough to publish forecasts now expect 1985 to be the peak of this (business) cycle and 1986-87 the downturn. Growth, they argue, will slow down over the next two years. Bad news for the unemployed ...' (*Economist*, 14.9.85).

So what the proletariat in Britain has endured for the past five years - the rapid deterioration of its conditions of life at all levels - has been 'the good times' - and the bad news is that the things are going to get worse! In this, the latter respect, if in no other, the bourgeoisie is speaking the language of truth.

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE CRISIS

The avoidance of an open recession by British capital over the past three to four years has little to do with 'business cycles'. It has been dependent fundamentally on three major factors:

1. The 'recovery' staged by the US economy after the brutal recession of 1980-83.

The basic features of this 'recovery' - shorter in time and space than previous efforts to pull the world economy out of slump and five times as costly to mount - have been well chronicled in our press (2). The mindboggling debts run up by the US economy under Reagan (remember his - the man who was going to 'balance the budget'!) in its attempts to act as 'locomotive' for the world economy now threaten the system as much as the ills they were designed to cure.

German and British capital will now have to shoulder an even larger share of the burden of the deteriorating world economy - and without even the momentary benefit of a wide-open US market to sustain their own economic activity.

The temporary respite afforded by the US recovery is well and truly over, and with it British capital's short-lived breathing space. Simultaneous recession and hyper-inflation, and sections and even entire branches of industry going to the wall; brutal contractions in all kinds of economic activity - this is what the bourgeoisie is unable to avoid any longer and is thus preparing to administer.

To believe this is an exaggeration is to profoundly underestimate what has already occurred at the level of British capital, and what's in store for tomorrow. The present frantic attempts of the American bourgeoisie to introduce this recession as gently as possible - the so-called 'soft-landing' of the US economy - are ample testimony to the severity of the contractions about to hit the world, and hence the British economy.

2. A sustained and vicious attack on the proletariat. Far from benefitting from the so-called recovery, the working class has paid for it, particularly on two levels: - an enormous increase in the rate of exploitation. One of the few indices to show an improvement for British capital vis-à-vis its

competitors is that of productivity. The growth of output per worker has increased dramatically over the past four years. This is exemplified by the plight of Ford workers at Bagenhall - their numbers have been reduced from almost 20,000 to less than 10,000 today, yet they continue to produce the same number of cars! The rate of exploitation has effectively doubled.

- an enormous increase in unemployment, which has reached its highest ever officially recorded levels. The September '85 figures show 2.4 million in receipt of state benefits and it is estimated that a further one to two million workers not eligible for state aid could be added to this total. This represents an intolerable and growing burden on the class as a whole since state 'aid' is in fact forcibly extracted from wages, while those in work often have to support more and more members of the family without a job.

In short, the British bourgeoisie has held down wages, decreased the numbers of those in work, increased the rate of exploitation for those who remain in employment and mounted an attack on all aspects of workers' conditions. In the last six months alone we can note the abolition of minimum wage restraints, the restriction of debt payments to the young unemployed and their forcible recruitment into low-paid 'training schemes'; the plans to axe many pension payments; rises in various 'health' charges coupled with a marked deterioration in the actual services offered.

The perspective is for a brutal increase in unemployment coupled with cuts in the already meagre 'benefits' and those eligible to receive them. This is the reality behind the present 'revival' of the welfare state. At the same time, there is a much more direct attack on

workers, exemplified by London Transport's recent demand that certain bus crews shelve up to 150 from their weekly pay packets or lose their jobs! According to reports in the *Comunist*, many British industry bosses have so far been reticent in driving down wages too far, preferring instead to lay-off workers in order to reduce the total wage bill. This option, the CBI reports, is now passing. The ability of the British bourgeoisie to time attacks and to choose which sector to pick off is being eroded by the evolution of the economy. More and more forced to frontally attack the entire class.

3. The final factor which has masked the real underlying deterioration of the economy has been the tremendous growth in raw production.

Recent well-publicised arms sales to Jordan and Saudi Arabia are just the tip of the iceberg. But far more significant that arms exports is the fact that British industry, research and development essentially revolves around the arms sector. The Ministry of Defence is probably the largest single customer of British industry. The £9 billion weapons system budget for 1985/86 alone is administered by a mini-bureaucracy of 40,000 civil servants; it issues some 30,000 contracts monthly to over 1,000 companies in Britain and abroad. The heart of British industry is devoted to the production of the means of destruction - the war economy and it drains like a vampire all the resources of civil society. Again, this activity in no way indicates a strength for the economy, but only the fact that economic competition inexorably gives way to military competition. Capital's only perspective in the face of the insalubrious economic crisis is war.

TOWARDS A NEW WORLD RECESSION

Despite the now exhausted US recovery; the unprecedented attacks on the proletariat, and the growth in arms production, the situation of British capital has deteriorated over the past five years. It is in a particularly weak position to face the shocks of the looming recession. The U-turn in government policy, from monetarist rigour to massive state over-spending, with vigorous state intervention to prop up sterling and interest rates, are testimony to the fact that the bourgeoisie is desperate to try to adapt to the course of an economic crisis which is fundamentally out of its control. The working class can face the shocks or illusions of 'better times tomorrow' or in an amelioration of the attacks on its living standards. The very opposite is the case.

NR

Footnotes:

1. See 'The Conditions of the Working Class in Britain', *IS 90*, Feb. 1985.
2. See in particular, the series of articles in the *International Review* under the heading 'What Stage Has The Crisis Reached?'

Sixth ICC Congress

The ICC has just held its Sixth International Congress. At this Congress, the ICC resolutely confirmed its orientation towards intervention in today's workers' struggles. The prospect of an acceleration of the bourgeoisie's attacks on the proletariat's living and working conditions, in particular through massive unemployment in the most concentrated sectors of the proletariat, together with the growing simultaneity of workers' struggles, clearly pose the question of the responsibility of revolutionary organisations. The capacity of revolutionaries to live up to the demands of this situation is a precondition for the future development of the revolution, which perspective against capitalist barbarism.

It's in this sense that the Congress, which for a communist organisation is the moment when the whole organisation is united in a sovereign assembly, made a critical balance-sheet of its work and drew out the perspectives for the period up until the next Congress, by adopting resolutions on the international situation, on opportunism and centrism in the workers' movement, and on the perspectives for activity (intervention, press, proletarian political milieu). A more complete presentation of this work, as well as some of the resolutions, will be contained in the next *INTERNATIONAL REVIEW* (no. 44, 1st Quarter of 1980). Here we are briefly presenting the main themes of the Congress, the questions debated, and the background to the departure of the 'tendency' from the ICC.

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND INTERVENTION

"On the eve of the 1980s, the ICC designated these years as the 'years of truth', in which the formidable extent of what was at stake in the whole life of society would be clearly revealed. The half-way through this decade, the evolution of the international situation has fully confirmed this analysis:

- through an intensification of tensions between the imperialist blocs, expressed through a considerable jump in military expenditure and by the development of daunting campaigns of war ideology conducted by Reagan, the chief of the most powerful bloc;
- through the resurgence, in the second part of 1980, of class conflicts after their momentary retreat in '81-'83, preceding and following the repression of the workers in Poland. This resurgence has been characterised in particular by an unprecedented simultaneity of struggles, especially in the vital centres of capitalism and of the working class in Western Europe...

The existence of a historic course towards class confrontations does not imply that the proletariat is developing its struggles in a continuous way, that class conflicts reach, month after month, year after year, an ever-growing breadth and depth. Such a view would be totally at odds with the whole historical experience of the proletariat. It would contradict what Hong put forward in *The 18th September and which Luxemburg and other great revolutionaries analysed with accuracy* on the moment of the class struggle through advances and retreats in its progress towards decisive confrontations with capitalism." (Resolution on the International Situation, Sixth ICC Congress)

The characteristics of the present period in particular - the collapse of capitalism into the economic crisis, the combativity and maturing class consciousness of a proletariat who cannot be through a decisive defeat but which has been cut off from the revolutionary experience of the years 1917-21, the strategy of the left in opposition which the bourgeoisie is using against the working class - all this means that workers' struggles are developing in an uneven and relatively slow manner. The first obstacle these struggles come up against is that of crude unemployment. It's the confrontation with this obstacle which conditions the future development of workers' combat.

- "Faced with the two vital necessities of the workers' struggle: extension and self-organisation, the task of the union is to:
- to disorient the workers, to develop among them a feeling of powerlessness through the divisions between different unions, subdivisions on between the 'base' and the 'leadership';
- to fragment and isolate struggles in the corporatist, sectoral, or localist terrain;
- to put forward, against the danger of real ex-

tension, a false extension which aims to draw the most combative workers into the struggle. In September '83, in which presents extension as something limited to a particular industrial branch (textile strike in 83), or even to the different factories of one enterprise (minerals in October '83).

- to prevent any spontaneous outbreak of struggle, any tendency towards self-organisation, by acting in advance to nullify favourable forms of 'action' and by putting themselves at the head of movements as soon as they arise.

This tactic of the bourgeoisie, which aims at occupying the workers' terrain and is the essential component of the strategy of the left in opposition, has been widely used in 1980. At the present time it constitutes a real political offensive of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

The proletariat cannot avoid this political battle before anyone can it. It cannot and must not allow the left parties and unions to manoeuvre freely on the terrain of the defense of the living standards, but must resolutely and systematically oppose and confront these manoeuvres." (1814)

The outcome of the course towards decisive class confrontations will be determined by the capacity of the working class to extend the development of its consciousness and equip itself with the organisations necessary for its revolutionary combat (the unitary organisation regrouping all the workers, the workers' councils, and the political organisation regrouping the communists, the party). This perspective is being prepared right now:

- "The historic resurgence of the proletariat at the end of the '80s puts the formation of the party on the agenda, but this could not be realised doing so:
- the half-century gap separating us from the previous revolutionary parties;
- the disappearance or atrophy of the left fractions which came out of them;
- the distrust many workers have towards any political organisation, whether proletarian or bourgeois, which is an expression of the danger of centralism as identified by the ICC, a transposition of a historic weakness of the resistance, fused with the necessity to politicise its combat.

It is up to the revolutionary groups who exist today to actively prepare the conditions for the party, not by proclaiming themselves The Party, or offering the working masses no other perspective than relying on their banner, but by bringing this idea to life, by developing a systematic work for regrouping of revolutionary forces and for intervention in the class. It's through intervention in particular, by putting forward proposals for action that correspond to the needs of the class, that revolutionaries will be able to prove concretely to the workers the necessity for a revolutionary organisation, thus laying the foundations for the future party of the communist revolution." (1816)

By taking up these orientations the ICC has validated and developed the adaptations in its work which it has been making since Autumn '83. The Congress clearly affirmed the centrality of intervention in the period ahead.

"Intervention in the class struggle, based on class demands, must be the ICC's priority. The organisation's political presence through its activists as having been 'excluded' from the organisation on the terrain of the defense of the workers' immediate interests in the face of capitalist's attacks, using the workers' class and the methods of struggle (strikes, demonstrations, meetings, assemblies, workers' groups, unemployed committees), is not only possible but necessary, and has an influence amongst the workers, whether or not it is in the unions that will form the movement, whether the workers be present in small or large numbers. This is the precondition for the long-term fighting the war for which it exists in the working class, for it being capable of denouncing the union directives of struggle and their strategy of demobilisation (inside operations, command 'actions', union delegations and petitions, corporatist and nationalised demands, for it being capable of putting concrete propositions for action, to encourage the class' reflection, to unify and polarise action, whenever the workers' interests are defended." (Activities Resolution, Sixth ICC Congress)

The concern to take up its responsibilities in the class struggle was further concretised in specific resolutions on each section of the ICC, on the need to adapt all our territorial publications to a newspaper format and to militant distribution in the workers' milieu, and on our attitude towards proletarian political groups.

THE DANGER OF COUNCILISM, AND OPPORTUNISM AND CENTRISM IN THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT. THE DEPARTURE FROM THE ICC OF THE 'TENDENCY'

Over the two years since the previous Congress some of the most important debates in the history

of the ICC have developed, debate on the nature of the difficulties faced by the organisation, and by revolutionary groups in general, and on the nature of the obstacles encountered by the working class in the development of its consciousness. The ICC was faced with the presence, in its own ranks, of concessions to the ideology and practice of councilism, even though it had always insisted on its rejection of the councilist conception of class consciousness and of the function of revolutionary organisations. These concessions were characterised as centrism slippings towards councilism, expressing not only the weaknesses of the ICC but also the more general conditions in which the consciousness of the working class is developing in the present period. The more general framework within which this position was adopted was the question of the permanence of the danger of opportunism and centrism, expressions of the pressure of bourgeois ideology, and of its penetration into proletarian organisations, leading to an abandonment of the proletariat's principles and its Marxist method, to behaviour vacillating between proletarian positions and the positions of the enemy class. In these questions, we refer readers to texts already published in our press on the danger of councilism, on opportunism and centrism, and in particular to the resolution adopted and the counter-resolution rejected by the Sixth Congress, which will be published in *INTERNATIONAL REVIEW*, no. 44.

The positions we have taken up on these questions have led to divergences. These divergences at first on class consciousness and the importance of the danger of councilism, on the existence of opportunism and centrism in the organisations of the proletariat in this period, and the raised by various comrades. They broadened to a rejection of the acceleration of intervention and of the organisational methods the ICC uses to conduct its debates. They crystallised into the constitution of a 'tendency' at the beginning of 1980, regrouping comrades who defended all or certain of these divergences, a 'tendency' based essentially on a simple opposition to the orientations and tasks of the ICC, to the gains it had made in this debate and in its intervention, seen as evidence of 'repression' and 'activism' and without offering any concrete alternative to this 'diagnosis'. Faced with this growing opposition on all aspects of our activity, accompanied by a tendency for the comrades to disengage from the work of the organisation, by increasingly frequent declarations about the 'irreversibility of the regression, and the de facto exclusion of the tendency', the Congress intervened right at the beginning. The comrades were asked what their militant commitment to the organisation. The response was a 'we'll see', an ultimatum making their commitment conditional on the acceptance of their positions by the Congress. Faced with such an attitude, the Congress asked these comrades to withdraw until the next session of the Congress, in order to reflect and give a clear answer. While the ICC's conception of organisation allows for the development of minority positions and has adopted clear rules to facilitate their expression, this conception in no way recognises a 'conditional' commitment to the organisation, no matter what divergences may develop. The comrades rejected the Congress' request, preferring to leave the Congress, and to see themselves as having been 'excluded' from the organisation. They have decided to form a 'fraction', outside the organisational framework of the ICC, in order to 'defend the platform' and the same analysis of the 'rising class struggle' in the present period, without, of course, the present orientations of the organisation. For the ICC, this 'fraction' has no reason for existing.

These comrades' assertions about the 'monolithic' character of the organisation and their 'exclusion' from it, express either the disorientation of these comrades, or had faith hiding other aims than the ones advanced. These comrades are dead wrong in seeing the ICC's present positions as a 'regulation' of the principles upon which it was constituted'. Not only are these orientations in continuity with our previous ones, while correcting the incomprehensions which existed alongside them, but they are the only ones which will enable the ICC to concretely apply its 'basic principles' in the face of the changes taking place in the class struggle now and in the period ahead.

The ICC does not arbitrarily 'expose' minorities or 'strike' debates and, if the comrades still have a minimum of lucidity, they will know this. In order to defend the positions which the comrades claim to hold, there is no need to constitute yet another group in a proletarian political milieu already scarred by sectarianism and the conception of 'everyone to their own group'. On the bases which have been put forward, the constitution of a so-called 'fraction' is not justified. It can only be explained if, in reality, something else is hidden behind what is being said.

(Continued on page 4)

WILDCAT TAILLEDS THE RIOTS

After three waves of social revolts in Britain's inner cities (1980, 81, 82), communists have been able to identify the essential content of their intervention on this question:

- first of all, insisting that workers must affirm their solidarity with these revolts, engendered by the misery and repression of capitalism in crisis, and thus reject any notion of solidarity with the state and the police;
- secondly, pointing out that, in themselves, these revolts don't have the same dynamic towards extension, self-organisation, and politicisation as the class struggle of the workers (employed or unemployed). Consequently, communists don't call for 'more riots' but for the intervention of the proletariat on its own terrain, to offer a way forward to the elements involved in these movements.

In this context, what has been the response of the communist current? We can best answer this by looking at the latest issue of *Wildcat* (no.7), which they call their 'Riot Special'. In a double page article called 'Support the Riots!', *Wildcat* displays:

- a brazen capitulation to the immediate consciousness of the riots and thus an inability to defend a proletarian political perspective towards them;
- a pathetic tailing of the anarchist/libertarian swamp.

CAPITULATING TO IMMEDIACY

"The growing organisation and ferocity of riots in Britain is a tremendous step forward in the class struggle. We totally support the riots."
WILDCAT

The ferocity of the riots is undoubtedly a reflection of the growing tension between the classes in today's period. But neither this, nor the fact that many of the 'rioters' are unemployed proletarians, is sufficient to make the riots proletarian in character. The class struggle emerges, and classes define themselves, around the struggle against the economic exploitation of the proletariat. But although this struggle encompasses the workers' fight against state repression, not every fight against state repression is a workers' struggle. The riots begin and end with the 'revolt' of the defence of individuals, the 'community', 'black people'... consequently they do not in themselves enable the working class to develop its awareness of itself as a class. This is why they remain particularly vulnerable to racial and other inter-classist mystifications.

This also implies that the riots can't

develop the methods of the proletarian struggle, contrary to *Wildcat*'s assertion that: *"Many of the working class individuals of Britain's cities have learned the lessons of the defeat of the uprisings. At Tottenham, the rioters won. At Brixton, the police had to regained control the next day... The level of organisation which seems to have taken place before and during the riots shows that it's not just the police who've been planning what to do since '81."*

It's perfectly true that, like all popular movements, the riots have contained a spontaneous capacity for initiative and organisation. But again, this isn't enough to define them as proletarian. What characterises proletarian self-organisation isn't just initiative and creativity but the development of collective, centralised organs to direct the struggle and to serve as a crucible for deepening the consciousness of its participants. Embryonic mass meetings of residents or tenants have sometimes appeared before or after these revolts but they have not directed the resistance against the police, which has remained the work of disparate groups and individuals and which thus easily degenerates into random acts of destruction and looting.

By claiming that the rioters have learned the 'lessons of '81', *Wildcat* imply that there is a real dynamic in these movements towards higher levels of self-organisation and self-awareness; that, if they could be better organised, even more of them could be 'won'. *Wildcat* neglect to tell us how and through what *force* this could be done, apart from vague references to 'taking charge of our lives'. But the question is to insist that the working class struggles as a class - not that proletarians find 'better' ways of struggling on a basis that cannot take their movement forward.

We want to make it clear that there are indeed class issues raised by these revolts - especially the issue of unemployment, whose massive growth profoundly exacerbates social tensions in the inner cities. Thus one of the central components of a communist intervention towards the proletarians who participate in these movements is to insist on the necessity for the independent struggle and organisation of the unemployed. But here again *Wildcat* is in the opposite direction, as the following extract shows so strikingly: *"The Tottenham insurgents said more sense about what causes riots than all the left's right wing capitalist media put together; a New Society Journalist was told the following: 'Don't write any of that crap about unemployment and all that. We just don't give a shit,*

that's all.'"

Disillusionment with the existing order and especially its left-wing is certainly widespread and is one precondition for the coming proletarian offensive. But in itself it's quite insufficient and can either be recuperated or transformed into despair if it isn't given a positive alternative - a class standpoint which demonstrates the economic causes of today's misery and the necessity for the proletariat to provide a political solution to it. Defending this alternative is above all the task of the marxist vanguard - a task abandoned by *Wildcat* as it rushes to define the fashionable posture of 'we don't give a shit' as the acme of class consciousness.

SINKING INTO THE ANARCHIST SWAMP

The desire to gain an echo by caving in to the immediate consciousness of a social movement (a clear manifestation of opportunism) leads *Wildcat* to tail-end the New Look marchers typified by the Class War group, now reputedly selling 15,000 copies of its paper and the subject of such publicity in the national press. What sells Class War is the fact that it reflects (like a distorting mirror) the general negativity that exists amongst growing numbers of young proletarians.

But since it doesn't in any way seek to develop the proletariat's positive self-awareness, it turns this negativity at best towards acts of petty bourgeois hopelessness ('exemplary violence'), at worst towards out-and-out leftism (Class War recently tried to join the bourgeois 'Anti-Fascist Action' front, though apparently it was soon ejected). The influence of Class War-type anarchism on *Wildcat* is evident in the paper's increasing fetishisation of violence (scorecards showing how many cops have been done over, large pictures of molotov cocktails, etc) and its pitiful attempts to ape CW's 'racy' language (example: picture of riots with caption 'What a laugh grinning rioters overturn a car as masked nates watch'). Perhaps *Wildcat* hopes that all this will help them attain street-credibility, but it's a long way indeed from revolutionary marxism. While Class War tells the *Guardian* (18.10.82) that the style of their paper ('Punch the rich and the shit') aims to avoid 'the usual theoretical crap', marxism is the fight for theory to master hold of the masses and thus become a material force. Between these two irreconcilably opposed positions there is no middle ground - and *Wildcat*'s tail-end towards anarchism is the clearest proof of this.

MU

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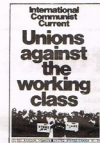
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WORLD REVOLUTION

PEACE TALKS TO LISABON
THE WORKING CLASS



East on West, behind the peace talks Imperialism's drive toward war continues

The Reagan/Gorbachev summit meeting is just one of the many campaigns of the bourgeoisie that attempts to exploit the ruin and deceleration of the decaying capitalist system to the advantage of the exploiters: to engulf the consciousness of the working class in hopelessness, and passivity. In fact, the peace campaign, which serves to highlight the looming threat of war, epitomises the whole of the bourgeoisie's effort to use the destructive logic of their own system against the working class. The prospect of nuclear war sums up all the other campaigns about mass starvation, state terror in the underdeveloped countries, as well as in Europe, and everything from hooligans to AIDS. If the workers are not demoralised by one set of images taken from the crisis of the system, that still leaves the 'uncertain future' to draw on - especially since war ignites a future much worse than what we have to live through today. And what makes the whole campaign relatively effective is the element of half-truth in all of this. There is indeed no controlling influence to govern the enmity between the Russian and American blocs. As the world economic crisis of capital deepens the tendency towards war deepens, and the antagonism between the blocs are raised to fever pitch.

There is however no uncertainty about the perspective should capitalism be left to its own devices to find its own 'solution' to its crisis - war will be the outcome, and, in this case, that means nuclear war. When we say that the capitalist system is out of control, we don't mean that the bourgeoisie don't know what they are doing - simply

that capitalism has become a completely irrational way of organising human affairs that is tending toward the destruction of the planet. For the bourgeoisie this future, war, and preparing to fight it, has become the insane logic of all its actions, the governing preoccupation of their lives. This can clearly be seen in the tendency towards the militarisation of all life in society and the priority given to such military projects as the SDI (Star Wars). From the beginning Reagan's election was the centrepiece of the bourgeoisie's strategy of putting its left parties into opposition to better confront the class struggle. At the level of the bourgeoisie's campaigns against the class struggle around the theme of war and peace, this strategy was brought to fruition with the 'Euro-missile' controversy (ie the installation in Europe of tactical cruise Pershing and SS20 missiles). This gave ample scope for a huge mobilisation of the capitalist left in Western Europe, in protesting against the conception of a capitalist 'peace' while at the same time arguing for a more effective non-nuclear preparation for war.

In reality, the western states are much more concerned about increasing their already enormous capacity on the level of so-called conventional weapons than in multiplying the number of nuclear weapons where there exists already an absurd capacity for 'overkill'. So even on this level the campaigns of the left suited perfectly the real perspective of the bourgeoisie. However, the main objective for all the fractions of the bourgeoisie was to whip up a campaign to divert the working class from its own terrain of resistance

to capitalism's austerity and war drive. The summit between Gorbachev and Reagan is the direct descendant of these earlier campaigns. Its preparation was signalled by the actual deployment of the American cruise missiles, and the consequent Russian walk out from the arm talks. This cleared the way for the second act of the melodrama. The only difference now is that for the moment Gorbachev and Reagan have taken the role of capitalist 'peace-makers', rather than the left parties and the 'peace' movements. The reality behind this role is the continuing surge of US and NATO expenditure on new 'conventional' weapons systems for Eastern Europe, and the development of Star Wars, designed to reestablish US supremacy on the level of strategic nuclear weapons. Russia merely trails along in the wake of all this, trying to keep up despite the fact that its economy is falling apart under the strains of the crisis. Both blocs are thus locked into the drive of the system towards generalised war.

While using its propaganda campaigns of passivity and despair around these themes, the bourgeoisie naturally omits to mention the existence of an alternative to all this: the overthrow of capitalism by the working class. It is this perspective which introduces a real element of uncertainty into the dynamic of society. The only force that holds the bourgeoisie back from unleashing their immense arsenal of destruction is the threat to their entire system posed by the struggle of the working class. On this level alone divides Gorbachev and Reagan. This is why, in the midst of their very real military rivalry, they can effectively unite across the blocs to create joint campaigns in order to stem the tide of the working class struggle. The most important example of this liaison between the blocs was in the collaboration of the US and Russia to prevent a dangerous ~~eastern~~ ~~western~~ mass strike in Poland at the beginning of the eighties, when under the cover of western propaganda broadcasts and negotiations on western 'aid' the west provided the necessary supports for the creation of the Solidarnosc trade union to blunt the workers' struggles while the Russian tanks were dangled as a threat over the workers' heads.

Similarly today, the Gorbachev/Reagan summit and the rest of the international campaign on war and peace is intended to help prevent the mass strike, exemplified by the Polish workers, from taking hold of the centres of world capitalism.

MD

Positions of the ICC



World Revolution is the section in Britain of the International Communist Current. The ICC traces its origins in the successive contributions of the Communist League, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Internationals, and the left fractions which detached themselves from the latter, in particular the German Dutch, and Italian Left.

Today the ICC defends the following basic positions, fundamental lessons of the historic struggle of the working class:

- Since World War 1, capitalism has been a decadent social system which has nothing to offer the working class and humanity as a whole except cycles of crises, wars and reconstructions. Its irreversible historical decay poses the single alternative for humanity: socialism or barbarism.
- The working class is the only class capable of carrying out the communist revolution against capitalism.
- The revolutionary struggle of the proletariat must inevitably lead the working class to a confrontation with the capitalist state. In destroying the capitalist state, the working class will have to set up the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale.
- The form of this dictatorship is the inter-

- national power of the workers' councils.
- Socialism, the mode of social reproduction initiated by the workers' councils is not 'workers' self-management' nor 'the nationalisation of the economy'. Socialism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations such as wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers; it means the construction of a world human community.
- The so-called 'socialist' countries (Russia, the Eastern bloc, China, Cuba, etc) are a particular expression of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself an expression of the decline of capitalism. There are no 'socialist countries' on this planet and the above countries are just so many capitalist bastions which the world proletariat will have to destroy along with all other capitalist states.
- In this epoch the trade unions everywhere are organs of capitalist discipline within the proletariat.
- All the so-called 'workers' parties' (the 'Communist' and 'Socialist' parties as well as their leftist appendages) are the left of capitalism's political apparatus.
- In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but sources of capitalist mystification; any participation in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce this mystification in the eyes of the proletariat.

- Today all factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. Any tactics which call for 'popular fronts' or 'united fronts' between the proletariat and any faction of the bourgeoisie can only serve to derail the struggle of the proletariat and disarm it in the face of the class enemy.
- So-called 'national liberation struggles' are moments in the deadly struggle between imperialist powers large and small to gain control over the world market. The slogan of 'support for people in struggle' amounts, in fact, to defending one imperialist power against another under nationalist or 'socialist' varnishes.
- The role of the revolutionary organisation is not to 'organise the working class' nor to take power 'on behalf of the workers' but to participate actively in the generalisation of proletarian struggles and revolutionary consciousness within the proletariat.

ACTIVITY OF THE ICC
The vital theoretical elaboration demanded by the re-awakening of the proletarian struggle after fifty years of counter-revolution. Organised intervention, on an international scale, in the struggles of the proletariat, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the self-organisation and revolutionary action of the working class.

WORLD REVOLUTION

Lessons of Post strike:

Workers can only win by spreading their struggles

The massive strike by 100,000 postal workers, which paralyzed the country's postal services for three weeks, has shown a clear light on the present reality of the workers' struggle.

CLASS STRUGGLE IS ALIVE AND WELL

Against all the propaganda about the 'new realities' of the 'flexibility' of the working class in the face of the savage attacks imposed by the bosses and the government, this strike has confirmed that the working class is not defeated, that it is fighting back with increasing determination.

Last February more than a million workers - healthworkers, carworkers, seamen, etc - were involved in the biggest strike movement in this country since the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1979. That movement was rolled back because the different struggles failed to unite. But the postal workers have proved that the militancy that preceded the February movement hasn't gone away. Healthworkers are still seething at government promises about pay are shown to be worthless. Local government workers are already taking or preparing for action. The material for an even greater explosion than last winter's is piling up all the time.

The strike waves in Holland, Yugoslavia, and above all Poland this summer demonstrate that the international working class is resisting the ravages of this crisis-ridden system. The postal workers have shown that the struggles in Britain are an integral part of this movement. That is why workers all over the world have been following their strike with sympathy and concern.

POSTAL WORKERS DEFT THE BOSSES...AND THE UNIONS

The growing anger of the postal workers against increasingly intolerable working conditions expressed itself in more than 64,000 strike days last year - most of them wildcats. The one-day national strike called by the UCU on 31 August had the aim of channeling all this anger into a harmless gesture. The issue the union focussed on - special payments to a minority of postal workers - was deliberately chosen as one that would keep workers divided.

But if the UCU thought that the one-day strike would put an end to the trouble in the post office, the workers thought otherwise. In response to further attacks by the management, tens of thousands of workers took unofficial action. The dispersed wildcats of last year came together into a national unofficial strike.

Like the seamen, the carworkers and the healthworkers last year, the postal workers recognized in practice that if you wait for the

unions to lead a fight against the bosses, you'll wait forever.

ISOLATION LEADS TO DEFEAT

The initial action of the postal workers shook the bosses and the union. But within a few days the strike had already begun. Now the management and the union have done a deal which both claim as a 'great victory'. And so it is a victory against the workers, who have won nothing of any substance from their struggle. The reason for this is simple: **THE STRIKE DIDN'T SPREAD BEYOND THE POSTAL SECTOR.**

The heavy blow suffered by the miners, the printers, the P80 and the Vickers workers are proof enough if we stay isolated in our own sector, if we concentrate our attention on stopping a few scabs instead of going out to other sectors and asking them to join us, if we try to wear the bosses down through a long economic blockade, **WE WILL BE DEFEATED.**

This 'corporatist' notion of every sector fighting on its own is precisely the one that the trade unions do all they can to keep alive. That's why if we listen to the advice of the unions, if we allow them to take over the running of our struggles, **WE WILL BE DEFEATED.**

When any group of workers enters into struggle today, it's taking on not just this or that employer, but the whole capitalist system - its parties, its police, its media, and its unions. No one sector of workers is strong enough to push back the attacks which are planned and coordinated by the whole ruling class through the state. Even when many sectors are out at the same time, as they were last winter, their struggles will be undermined if they don't unite.

ONLY THE EXTENSION OF THE STRUGGLE TO OTHER WORKERS CAN WIN

We can't afford to go on making the same mistakes. We've got to draw the lessons from recent defeats and discuss **HOW TO FIGHT EFFECTIVELY** in the next round of the battle.

The impasse reached by the postal workers' strike once again proves that:

- It's a mistake to allow the unions to disperse us when a strike begins. We need to hold regular general assemblies to keep control of the struggle!

- It's a mistake to believe that a particular struggle has nothing to do with other sectors of our class. We need to make our mass meetings open to all workers and to the unemployed. We need to send big delegations to workers in other industries, calling on them to join our struggle, to link their struggles with ours!

- It's a mistake to limit ourselves to demands that are specific to one sector or category, like the issue of carnals in the post office. All workers are under attack today, whether through speed-ups, low pay, redundancies, reductions in benefits, declining health and safety conditions....it's this which makes it possible to raise demands that can bring all workers into a common fight.

The period ahead is going to see the outbreak of massive struggles in Britain as in the rest of the world. Those workers who already see the necessity for unity across union or sectoral boundaries must prepare for this now by coming together in action groups or struggle committees whose role is:

- to discuss the lessons of previous struggles and the perspective in front of us;

- to intervene directly in the struggle, defending the methods and demands that will enable it to extend and unify.

NO MORE CORPORATISM NO MORE DEFEATS THROUGH ISOLATION ONE WORKING CLASS, ONE STRUGGLE

(ICC leaflet, 13.9.88)

CONTENTS

- Lessons of the postal strike /2
- Inflation: a product of capitalism's decline, not workers' militancy /3
- In Poland - government and opposition against the working class /4
- Capitalism cannot make peace /5
- Massacre in Kurdistan
- World capital is responsible /5
- Decomposition of capitalist society /6
- Letters on WR's language and the financial appeal of Counter-Information /7
- Usteri: the bourgeoisie whips up sectarian divisions /8

NALGO 'day of action'

Local government workers are being balloted on a one-day national strike over pay, proposed for October 3, with the postal strike still uppermost in everyone's minds. The union involved, NALGO, is anxious to keep things under a tight rein. School ancillary workers in NALGO, for example, have been instructed not to ask teachers or members of other unions to join the action.

The council workers need to reflect very seriously about what happened to the postmen. The time leading up to the day of action, and the day itself, won't be wasted if they use it to hold meetings, open to all workers regardless of union membership, to discuss of union membership, to discuss how to overcome the divisions that have led to previous struggles being blocked or defeated.



POST STRIKE Workers respond to speed-ups

The massive unofficial action by the postmen was the culmination of a long period of growing anger. This follows a year in which there have been 195 strikes with 62,405 man days lost in the Post Office.

There can be little wonder that postmen are angry. Letter traffic is up by 30% in five years, productivity up 25% with costs down 15%. This means appalling pay and conditions for the workers:

- basic pay 125 pounds a week, earnings up 1.5% when inflation is 8%;
- postmen carrying bags twice the traditional weight;
- discipline in sorting offices involving tired visits to the toilet and interruption of breaks;
- regular testing of the number of letters workers can sort in a given time.

Conditions have deteriorated so much that turnover is up to 80% per year in some offices. However, the postal workers anger wasn't only directed against the management.

"But none of this would have been possible without the full cooperation of staff, and the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) in particular. New technology, including mechanised sorting, has been introduced by agreement . . .

"... the UCW has acted as a moderating influence on local members' feelings." Alan Tiffin is a member of remarkably unwise honesty, *The Sunday Times*, 11 Sept. 88. (See [pg 110](#) for a worker's view of the union role).

As a result of these kinds of agreements between bosses and unions, the postal workers were becoming increasingly suspicious of anything coming from the UCW. Nearly all the many local disputes of the last year were wildcats. In order to regain some credibility in front of the workers, the UCW called a one day national strike on 31 August on the speeded checks and

definitely divisive issue of bonus payments in the first year. Despite the token nature of this stoppage, the first national strike in 17 years, it received almost total support.

Workers at fourteen offices came out on strike again the following day, this time unofficially, against various management provocations, and by the following week an almost total national strike developed on 'who issues of casual workers brought in to clear the mail, and of solidarity with striking offices when mail was transferred from office to office. This time the strike looked very different. No longer was there a to-beer picket, but militant pickets assembling in large numbers, particularly at the large sorting offices in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and London.

By Monday 5th 48,000 were on strike. The following day the number of strikers doubled to two thirds of the workforce. The mail was paralyzed and the number of strikers continued to grow.

If the UCW endorsed this strike action, it certainly didn't initiate it, and had little choice but to take the nominal head of the movement. However, this posed little danger to the union. The bosses and the union had in fact chosen a good time for the showdown with the workers, because there were few other struggles going on simultaneously, making it easier to present the postal strike as something of interest only to postal workers. The demands were kept in the workers' areas of differential bonus payments and security, specific to the Post Office, rather than expressing the general concerns of increased exploitation, increased work discipline and falling real pay, shared by all workers. So although the issue of solidarity was present in the minds of the strikers, the union was able to especially when workers came out against sorting mail transferred from striking offices, the workers were unable to take this onto the next day's

level: the direct call for other sectors of workers to join the movement.

THE UNION TRIEVES...ON THE ISOLATION OF THE WORKERS

Given the isolation of the strike from other sectors - an isolation that also existed within the sector, since the workers seem to have made few attempts to create direct links between the different sorting offices - the UCW soon regained control of the movement. As in countless other struggles, the militant energies of the workers started to be channelled into ritual confrontations between police and pickets, like the ones in Liverpool when a few casual workers were escorted into the huge sorting office.

Meanwhile the union negotiators came out of 40 hours of talks on 10 Sept. with an agreement... to redress the main issues later, and locally, when the workers were back at work. This was a blatant attempt by the UCW to divide the workers and send them back to work empty-handed. Not surprisingly many workers bitterly resented this latest 'sell-out' and it took the union well over a week to organise a return to work, with many offices returning on Thursday the 15th, and with Cardiff, Newport, Hull, Bolton and Oldham still striking on Monday 19 Sept.

When the strike began workers were clearly disaffected with the union's token strike call. By the end of the strike they were openly angry with the UCW as with management. As workers said at Mount Pleasant, London, they had been out for nothing, the union had sold them out. The militancy of the postal workers has exposed the real position of the UCW as an ally of management.

AP

Radical unionists reinforce isolation

After years of rotten deals between the management and the UCW, the postal workers have grown extremely distrustful of 'their' union. In order to prevent this distrust growing into a real challenge to the basic trade union idea that each sector has to struggle in isolation, the 'radical', 'rank and file' wing of the union structure had to work hard to keep the workers locked up in this corporatist framework. In essence this meant articulating the 'sell-out leadership' of the UCW while doing everything possible to stop the workers going beyond the limits of the postal sector.

When the UCW issued its call for a one-day strike, the aim of which was to regain credibility among the workers and channel their discontent into a sterile token gesture, the leftists and the shop steward apparatus all supported it without any attempt to expose the union's real aims.

"A national one day strike this week will be an excellent start to a fight to defend national pay rates" wrote *Redlist Worker* before the strike, adding, of course, "but it won't be enough" (1 Sept 88). And so it advised postal workers to "build for all out action in fact by the time this issue of *Redlist Worker* had come out, the workers had already built 'all-out action by walking out spontaneously all over the country, against management provocations. Now the SWP had to run to catch up to turn what is now brother the UCW. "Spread the strike" it called in its leaflets. This sounds radical but again it was only what the workers themselves were already doing. For the leftists 'spreading the strike' could only mean spreading it to 'offices and grades not yet involved' (SWP postal strike leaflet), is to other categories of postal workers, not other sectors.

At the same time the leftists called for more involvement in the mass pickets to prevent the entry of casuals and other strikebreakers, for more collections, more money from other 'trade unionists', or better still the strike pay that the unionist in any case hardly ever coughs up. In other words: forget the miners' strike, forget Happing, forget SWP forget FRG, forget Pickers! If only we struggle hard enough, we can win this isolation.

But workers can't afford to forget the lessons of all these defeats. The moment a strike gets locked up in one sector, it is doomed to wither and die. The postal strike confirmed this once again as soon as it became clear that the strug-

gle wasn't going to ignite a more general movement, the bosses and unions could get down to the serious business of burying it. And however much the leftists and rank and file unionists derided "Tiffin's dirty deal" (*Redlist Worker*, 'Post Strike Special'), they are the ones who do the most to create the conditions for such deals. The workers showed that they were perfectly prepared to go further than the mockery of struggle proposed by the leadership: it was the leftists and stewards who were in the forefront of blocking a real extension of the struggle, by proposing more 'radical' versions of the same sectoral traps.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISTS MOP UP FOR THE TROTS

As a matter of fact, Trotskyist groups like the SWP and Socialist Organizer were not the most radical guardians of corporatism. The SWP in particular has been drifting from a policy of supporting 'workers' self-activity' and 'rank and file' groups to one of openly prostrating itself in front of the union tops. "The Post Office can be beaten provided the union takes the initiative and mobilises its members in the fight to defend the union" (SWP leaflet); increasingly the SWP tells workers that the key to win is to pressure the union leadership to organize "A proper national strike", to "use the excellent fight shown by the postal workers so far to turn what is now a defensive dispute into a counter-offensive against years of Post office attacks" (SWP 10 Sept).

Such positions are less and less attractive to a minority of workers who are beginning to ask some very basic questions about the trade unions. To recuperate the energies of this militant minority, we've seen the development of anarcho-syndicalist groups like the Direct Action Movement who can outbid the Trotskyists in radical language.

The DAM has in the last few months definitively asserted its grip over the Communication Workers' Group, expelling proletarian elements hostile to the unions and rank and file ideas. In number 6 of their bulletin, issued in response to the postal strike, we find plenty of insults against the 'union bosses' but not one word about spreading the strike to other sectors. Like all the other leftists, they push for for the long-drawn-out, set-piece confrontation: "the dispute must continue until we get a better deal", claiming that "it's the best chance we've had in

years". The fact that management and unions answered to provide the strike when other workers were still relatively quiet is ignored. Once again it's the idea that pushing the strike to its ultimate limits within the sector is enough to win. And so although the economic demands contained in the leaflet correspond to some of the most immediate needs of the workers, this doesn't represent any challenge to corporatism, since the DAM remains silent on how to achieve these demands.

In this context, even the radical call for mass meetings to 'decide on a strategy' remains within a corporatist framework; mass meetings should be open to all workers and they exist to organise the extension and unification of the struggle. They are not just a mass sectoral organ to put pressure on the union.

Thus from the social democratic and Stalinist union tops to the Trotskyist and anarchoist base, there's a united corporatist front, a division of labour to keep the workers imprisoned inside their own sector. Militant workers can only combat this capitalist front by consistently defining the need for the unity of all workers' struggles.

WJ

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INFLATION: A PRODUCT OF CAPITAL'S DECLINE, NOT OF WORKERS' MILITANCY

For an economy that's supposedly "stronger than any time since the 1960s" British capitalism is in a very shaky condition. Not content with the continual tampering with the unemployment figures, Nigel Lawson is now suggesting that the retail price index is "perverse" to include mortgage interest payments, and that such things are responsible for the "temporary blip" that has brought the official inflation figure to 5.7% (the highest since 1965, and with a perspective of at least 7% for the year as a whole).

Talk of an "overheating" economy which has an "inflationary gap" also appears rather weak in the face of the worst ever trade deficit in July. Last year's current account deficit was £24 billion; Lawson's budget projection for this year was £4 billion; but the deficit is already nearly £8 billion, and the most recent revised estimates are between £12 and £15 billion for the whole year.

And as for the productivity figures, despite some gains over the last four years, even if it was possible to sustain them it would, according to the OECD, take Britain 7 years to catch up with productivity levels in Germany, 8 to catch up with France, more than 20 to catch up with Japan and probably never catch up the US.

The social consequences of such "blips" in the "strong" economy are explained by the government. Thatcher, for example, says that people should save more, which is just a joke when you consider that the state has just cut income tax. Trading admits there are more than two million who have borrowed more than they can afford to repay, and in the "consumer" is facing problems with debts. But more important is the way the ruling class tries to link the rise in prices with wages. Wage rises are supposed to cause inflation and, as Norman Fowler put it, the inflation figures "should not be used as an excuse for increased wage claims."

In short, the bourgeoisie says the working class is the cause of inflation and therefore suffers the consequences of it. What follows is an article written by a bourgeois writer in 1973, and published in 1972, which goes into the real causes and symptoms of inflation. It is particularly relevant as it shows how the "greatest burst of inflation of the post-war period corresponded to its most serious recession: that of 1971 while even in the wake of a deeper recession (in the early 80s) and greater inflation (in the late 70s) the perspective is once again toward an expression of the crisis which is both inflationary and recessionary. Much has happened in the subsequent 15 years, but, at the level of the economy, the crisis has worsened as we anticipated, and the class struggle, particularly over the last five years, has been more widespread than at any time in the history of the workers' movement. Inflation, as the article shows, is not just a "blip" in the economy, but a fundamental symptom of capitalism's insoluble crisis.

THE REAL CAUSES OF INFLATION

The fundamental causes of inflation are to be found in the specific conditions of the capitalist mode of production in its decadent phase. Empirical observation allows us to see that the inflation is fundamentally a phenomenon of this epoch of capitalism and that it manifests itself more sharply in periods of crisis (1914-18, 1929-33, Korean War, 1957-8 in France during the Algerian war...) i.e. at times when unproductive expenditure is at its highest. It is thus legitimate to consider that it is by beginning with this specific characteristic of decadence, the immense role of armaments production and unproductive expenditure in general in the economy, that we can attempt to explain the phenomenon of inflation.

The decadence of capitalism is caused by the growing and more and more insurmountable difficulties which the system encounters in finding outlets for its commodities. At the level of each state, these difficulties provoke a constant increase in unproductive expenditure dedicated to the maintenance of a system which is historically condemned to death.

Unproductive expenditure on armaments which allow each state to defend tooth and nail the position of its national capital against rival capitals.

Unproductive expenditure on the state apparatus which, faced with a society in decomposition, is forced to exert a Moloch-like domination over the whole of social life (police, administra-

tion, judiciary)

expenditure on marketing, advertising, on research dedicated to making products more and more ephemeral, costs which are all concentrated in the marketing of commodities and not their production.

The existence of unproductive expenditure in capitalist society is not in itself a novelty. It is a fact of all societies and especially so in a system based on exploitation. It is the rule under feudalism, for example, where the nobility consumed the greater part of the social surplus product in the form of luxury goods. It manifests itself under capitalism from the beginning in the form of the state, of the army and the church and in the consumption of the capitalist class. But what is fundamentally new in the period of the decline of capitalism, as with the decline of other systems, is the magnitude of these expenditures in relation to productive activity as a whole at this level, namely, becomes quality.

Today, in the price of each commodity, alongside profits and the costs of labour power and of constant capital used in production, there is a greater and greater involvement of expenses which are indispensable to its being sold on a more and more saturated market (from the salaries of those engaged in marketing to the amount set aside to pay the police, functionaries and soldiers of the producer country). In the value of each object, the state which embodies labour time necessary for its production becomes smaller and smaller in relation to the part embodying human labour imposed by the necessities of the system's survival. The tendency for the weight of these unproductive expenses to annihilate the gains of labour productivity manifests itself in the constant rise in commodity prices.

In other words, inflation expresses the immense waste of productive forces which the system in decadence is obliged to resort to in order to keep itself alive. And since we are living in a society based on exploitation, inflation appears as the result of the immense waste of its irreparable contributions on the shoulders of the workers, by a continual attack on their standard of living.

Whether one considers the history of the twentieth century over short or long periods of time, one can assert that the growth of military expenditure (and unproductive expenditure in general) is always an inflationary factor. Over short periods, we have already said that wars lead to record rates of inflation. Over long periods, it appears that the uninterrupted ramping up of armaments production since World War II is the corollary of the massive armaments production from the Cold War until today, since the inter-war period of disarmament was marked by a slowing down or disappearance of inflation....

THE FAILURE OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST INFLATION

As we have seen, the fundamental causes of inflation reside in the contemporary mode of existence of the capitalist system which is manifested by an inordinate development of unproductive expenditure. In this sense, there could not be an effective struggle against inflation without a massive reduction in this expenditure. But, as we also have seen, this expenditure is absolutely indispensable to the system's survival, which means that the problem of the struggle against inflation is as insoluble as that of squaring the circle.

Being unable to attack the fundamental causes of the system, the bourgeoisie is forced to attack its consequences. It is in this way that it has attempted to carry out a series of measures:

- budgetary economies
- putting brakes on demand by limiting credit
- price restrictions
- wage restrictions.

Budgetary economies are attempts to deal with the fundamental causes of inflation. In fact, to the extent that this is impossible without touching the foundations of the system, policies of "budgetary rigour" can signify nothing but policies of austerity and liquidations on "social spending".

Thus, we have seen Nixon restricting the policies of the "Great Society" started up by Johnson. But in any case this measure has not been enough to prevent the existence of deficits of dozens of billions of dollars in the last two American budgets, deficits which, to the extent that they are covered by the issue of bank notes, is the injection into the economy of a mass of

currency which does not correspond to the creation of real value, are manifested in a fall in the value of money and a corresponding rise in inflation.

In general, to the extent that purchases by the state constituted one of the markets for capitalist production during the period of reconstruction, these restrictions have had the effect of accentuating today's recession. Governments are thus faced with a dilemma: inflation or recession, without really being able to prevent one by resorting to the other.

Policies of limiting credit, in so far as they propose to cut demand and thus to reduce markets, are also faced with the same dilemma: inflation or recession. However, these policies of "dear credit" have the result of increasing the costs of paying off invested capital, costs which have repercussions on the prices of commodities and lead to more inflation.

As for price restrictions, these have now become the background for a well-worn scenario: prices do not move as long as they are subject to government legislation, but as soon as this stops, the opportunity arises to use speculative bonds, the opportunity which is simplified by the fact that many suppliers, having awaited the end of restrictions in order to carry out their deliveries, have created an imbalance between supply and demand beneficial to the latter. Far from holding down inflation, price restrictions substitute an inflation by means and also for a longer period. Thus these restrictions do not have the desired effect but, to the extent that the system is unable to fight with its own laws and that these laws impose on it a continual rise in prices, there follows a major disequilibrium which of necessity expresses itself in recession: here again, the bourgeoisie is confronted with the same dilemma.

Wage restriction is the only measure which involves not only economic criteria but also the balance of forces between the classes. In this sense the failure or (temporary) success of such policies is conditioned by the balance of class forces among the workers. In the current period, when the working class is waking up after fifty years of defeat, every major attack on living standards is met with violent reactions (May '68, Danish '70, the 1971 British miners' strike which obtained not increases in a period of wage restriction, the recent strikes of German metal workers). Consequently the bourgeoisie, in spite of several attempts, continues to hesitate in imposing the draconian austerity measures on the working class which the situation demands: the reaction to such measures frightens the bourgeoisie so much that they dare not resort to them.

If attacking the workers' living standards is the only policy remaining to the bourgeoisie in its fight against inflation, it is at least a policy which it can only implement with the greatest circumspection.

Since this article was written we have had the wave of struggles which culminated in the mass strike in Poland in 1980-81 and the current wave of struggles that has been underway since mid-1983. Broadly speaking the last five years have been characterized by the intensification of the bourgeoisie's attacks (unemployment, cuts in the social wage, productivity pusher etc) and the growing resistance of workers' struggles. The perspective opening up is one where these attacks are augmented by the development of inflation. Fifteen years ago the ruling class could indeed "hesitate in imposing the draconian austerity measures on the working class which the situation demands" now, alongside the draconian measures which the bourgeoisie has already been forced to impose, we have the spectre of the return of inflation after a period in which the ruling class has, in the stronger sense of the word, "hesitated". It is thus legitimate to say that the ruling class will quite probably try to fiddle the inflation figures as it has done with those of unemployment, but the working class will be left in no doubt that it is they who are being made to suffer the consequences of the crisis. Workers literally can't afford to give any credence to the argument that their economic rights can cause inflation: on the contrary, they will have to fight harder than ever to defend their wage levels against both rising prices and the attempts to peg their wages below the rate of inflation.

BEHIND: GOVERNMENT & OPPOSITION AGAINST THE WORKERS

In August, the workers of Poland, in response to growing shortages and brutally sudden price rises, launched their biggest wave of struggles since the gigantic mass strike of August 1980. Beginning with spontaneous strikes in the mines of Silesia, the movement quickly spread right across Poland: from Silesia it went to the dockers and transport workers of Szczecin, to the shipyard workers of Gdansk, the steel and tractor workers of Warsaw, to Cracow, Lublin, Poznan and elsewhere.

This strike wave, coming so shortly after the movement last May, is a clear demonstration of the immense combativity of the world proletariat today in spite of the stinging defeat the Polish workers suffered in 1981; they are once again hurling themselves into battle against a particularly vicious example of a capitalist regime in crisis.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the strikes of 1980, this movement was brought to an end quite quickly; it didn't involve anything like the same numbers of workers; it didn't give rise to class-wide organs of struggle (like the MCS (inter-factory strike committees)); and it didn't win any real concessions from the ruling class. The reason for this is not that the workers' struggle is going backwards, either in Poland or internationally. It is that while in 1980 the Polish state bourgeoisie was poorly equipped to deal with the explosion, over the last 8 years it has developed a far more sophisticated apparatus for controlling the workers' struggle - above all the 'independent trade union', Solidarnosc.

The following extract from the forthcoming issue of our *International Review* shows exactly how government and 'opposition' worked hand in hand to subvert the workers' resistance. The Polish workers are now up against very similar obstacles to the workers in the west: in particular the trap of 'rank and file' unionism - but lack the same experience in confronting them. This highlights the importance of the struggle in the western 'democracies' as a means of springing the traps now being laid for the workers in the east.

It's possible that the government was surprised by the breadth of the struggles. However, its conduct throughout the period they lasted showed that it had learned a great deal since the summer of '80 and that at no point had it been overwhelmed by the situation. Each time a new enterprise came out on strike it took care to encircle it with a curtain of 'donors' (special anti-riot units). Thus, each workplace occupation became a trap for the workers in struggle and prevented them from entering into combat with their class brothers and thus from unifying the movement, from forming a single battlefield. Repression and intimidation weren't limited to this. On 22nd August, the day the movement was extending the most, the interior minister, general Kiszczak, appeared in uniform on TV to announce a series of measures aimed at blocking this extension: establishment of a curfew in the three regions most hit by the strikes (Katowice, Szczecin and Gdansk); any person 'external' to an enterprise on strike would be removed and would risk imprisonment. He accused the strikers of being armed and raised the spectre of a "bloodbath." At the same moment his performance was backed up by the one on Russian TV which put pictures of striking enterprises and accused the strikers of being 'extremists who exert pressure and threats on their comrades through illegal strikes.' The iron bars with which workers equipped themselves to respond to a possible police intervention were presented as the instruments used in these 'brutalities.' Thus, the question of dealing with a movement of the working class, Gorbachev sets his 'Glasnost' to one side and uses the classical language of Stalinist terror: the workers in Russia must on no account get any ideas about instituting their class brothers in Poland and the latter must understand that they can expect nothing from 'liberalisation' (in any case they couldn't have had too many illusions since Gorbachev visited Poland at the beginning of July and said that the Polish people "should be proud to have leaders like Jaruzelski," whom he referred to as his "personal friend.")

The threats did not remain purely verbal. They were backed up by actions: Silesia was cut off from the country by army and police barriers; every day the Koms intervened in new enterprises to dislodge the workers (notably in Silesia where, below ground, the miners' luxury of food, medicine and blankets) arrests multiplied. These hit strikers but also members of the opposition and in particular leaders of Solidarnosc, such as Praszynski, the head of the union in Wroclaw and a member of the national leadership.

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ship. In the first case the aim was to pressure the strikers to go back to work and to dissuade other workers from joining the struggle. But arresting the union leaders had another aim: to make Solidarnosc credible so that it could fully play its role of sabotaging the struggle. For once again the defeat of the workers derived above all from the action of trade unionism. The anti-working class aims of Solidarnosc were defined candidly in May by Kuron, one of the main 'experts' of Solidarnosc and founder of the former KOR:

"Only a government which had the confidence of society could stop the course of events, and call for austerity in the framework of reforms. What's really at stake in the present battle is the constitution of such a government." (interview with the French paper *Libération*, 5 May 1980).

You could hardly be clearer: the goal of Solidarnosc is the same as the government's: to make workers accept 'austerity.' This is why, right from the beginning of the movement, the union was actively sabotaging it. One of the essential components of its strategy was to divert the workers' attention into a dead end - whereas the movement began around wage demands, Solidarnosc threw all its weight into ensuring that there would be "only one demand: the legalisation of the trade union." Thus, when Wales called for a strike in the Lenin shipyard on 22 August, it was with the slogan "no more joking, we want Solidarnosc now" - as if the workers' defense of their most elementary living conditions, their resistance against slavery, were just jokes.

For his part, the reputedly 'radical' president of the Lenin shipyard strike committee also affirmed: "The only demand is the reestablishment of Solidarnosc."

Solidarnosc launched its appeals to strike in a very selective manner. On the one hand, in many of the places where there was a very strong pressure for struggle, Solidarnosc took care not to call for a strike: in order to keep the lid on the workers' militancy, it declared 'a state of preparation for a strike' or else threatened to call for a strike in case the authorities unleashed a general repression - which they obviously avoided doing. On the other hand, the direct call for a strike at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, which since the summer of '80 has been a symbol for the whole working class in Poland, was also part of a manoeuvre. It's one of the enterprises where Solidarnosc is best implanted, notably because Walesa worked there; because of this, it would be easier to get workers there back to work, and this would in turn have a symbolic value, since in the rest of the country the workers would have the feeling that they could only initiate their comrades in Gdansk. Furthermore, at the Lenin shipyard, in order to facilitate this return to work, Walesa did all he could to present the strike as a calamity, inevitably only because of the bad will of the government which had refused to listen to its repeated calls for negotiation:

"I wanted to avoid the strike. We shouldn't be on strike. We should be working. But we have no choice...we're still waiting for serious discussions." (22 August).

And in fact, in order to tire the workers out, the government and Solidarnosc played a cat and mouse game with each other for over a week, both giving proof of their 'intransigence' on the question of trade union pluralism (this polarising the workers around a false question): this carried on until both parties 'accepted' to meet each other to discuss 'without taboos' (sic) about the agenda of a hypothetical 'round table' which would get together, of course, when the workers had gone back.

Thus, the total complicity between the authorities and Solidarnosc is obvious. It is even more obvious when you know that one of the favourite sports of the leaders of Solidarnosc is to pass with impunity through the police cordons cutting off the enterprises and regions contravening the order to join strikers, as in the case of Jan Litnyski, founder of the KOR and responsible for Solidarnosc in Warsaw, who managed to join the strike committee of the Silesian mines and became its most important 'expert', and of Lech Walesa himself who 'climbed the wall' into the Lenin shipyard. Really: the Polish participants are so inefficient....

As always in Poland, the Church participated in the division of labour: it could even afford the luxury of ringing out two tunes: the moderate tune of the chaplain of the Lenin shipyard, who on the eve of the strike, adopted a position against it, saying it would 'set fire to Poland'; and the 'radical' tune which gave its full support to the strikers and their demand for 'trade

union pluralism.' Even the forces of the official power made play of their 'disagreement' in order to disarm the workers. Thus on 24 August, the official unions (OPZ), whose president is a member of the political bureau of the Party, warned the government that it must 'listen to their opinion' on the threat of calling a general strike. Jaruzelski must have been really scared.

Finally, thanks to these manoeuvres, the bourgeoisie got what it wanted: a return to work without the workers having won anything. It was an important defeat for the workers which will leave its mark. It's all the more a defeat in that the sabotaging work of Solidarnosc, as an organisation, has not been exposed - it was left to Walesa, who's always ready for this kind of job, to appear as the one who 'broke out of the strike'. His popularity will no doubt have lost a few feathers, but 'you can't make omelettes without breaking eggs'. The essential thing is that the majority of workers still have their illusions in 'free' trade unions. By refusing to legalise Solidarnosc (while in fact Solidarnosc is already well-established, with numerous weekly papers, collection of dues, regular meetings of its leaders - all that is 'normalised'), by continuing to 'persecute' its leaders, the official power has made its own contribution to these illusions.

Capitalism can't make peace

Under the gaze of a few bemused cows, a handful of nuclear disarmers, and dozens of reporters and TV cameramen, the first of the cruise missiles from Molewornost, Gdansk, were dismantled to be returned to Arizona, USA. Was this a 'milestone for arms control' as Britain's defence secretary George Younger said, or 'truly an historic event' as US ambassador Price put it? Does the east-west agreement on the reduction of nuclear missiles, coming at the same time as the ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan, Cuban troops from Angola, and Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, mean that the world is becoming a safer place, that east-west relations are getting better than they are?

Not a bit of it. All these 'peace treaties' are nothing but part of the preparation for future wars. The nuclear warheads from the easily targetable Molewornost and Greenham Common US airbases will be recycled into more efficient delivery systems and placed in less easily targetable warplanes and submarines. The ending of the Gulf war and the withdrawal of eastern bloc troops from various combat-zones simply demonstrates the continuing success of the US/NAO strategy of 'forward defence', ie the strangulation of Russia. Iran has been brought to its knees and can now be restored to its role as the USA's sentinel on Russia's southern flank. The eastern bloc is withdrawing its troops from other near-front regions because it had been severely pummeled by the western bloc's military offensive. It is being forced to adopt a policy of 'defensive defence', which means that it is as 'unthreatening' as a coiled-up cobra that has been forced into a corner.

Neither do these treaties bring any relief to the killing-fields themselves. In Afghanistan, the second city, Kandahar, has been cut off from the world by continued fighting. In the Gulf the ceasefire has permitted the Iraqis to unleash a genocidal attack on the Kurdish population. In Angola, the UNITA forces have begun a new offensive. The world isn't becoming a safer place. On the contrary, the increasingly desperate situation of the Russian bloc makes the threat of world war more and more tangible.

CAPITALISM GIVES BIRTH TO WAR

According to the bourgeoisie's propaganda, 'peace in our time' can be secured as long as the world's leaders can sit down together and discuss their differences amiably and rationally. Comparisons have been made between the recent 'peace' settlements and the great diplomatic conferences of the early 19th century, which inaugurated the era of 'peace' in Europe. But such arguments obscure the fact that wars are not caused by the irrational or venial attitudes

udes of bourgeois statesmen, and neither peace a gift from well-meaning and hard-working diplomats. Periods of war or peace are determined not by the will of individuals but by the underlying movement of the capitalist economy and the social system dominated by blind economic laws and by the merciless requirements of competition, capitalism has always given birth to war. But the duration, extent, and function of war under capitalism have varied according to the historical evolution of the system's economic foundations.

WAR IN CAPITAL'S ASCENDANCY: A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES

In the 19th century capitalism was an ascending, expanding system. In this period war was led by the bourgeoisie to have the function of ensuring the formation of new nation states, of overcoming obsolete social forms that were a barrier to the revolutionary capitalist feudal divisions, aristocratic privilege, the crumbling despotism of the east. Through wars like the French revolutionary wars, the wars of German and Italian unification, the American civil war, etc, capitalism gave itself the economic, political, and social means to ensure its territorial expansion and the unification of the world market. Despite the suffering involved in these wars, they helped unleash a powerful development in the productive forces and were thus progressive for humanity as a whole. Furthermore, they were limited in time, limited geographically, limited to a small proportion of the population and in the destruction they caused. And following these wars there could be a real and long-lasting period of peace between the capitalist powers, based on a new thrust of development which often included both the 'winning' and the 'losing' countries. Thus the long periods of European peace in the 19th century (first following the Napoleonic wars, then the Franco-Prussian war of 1870) were not due to the vision of the statesmen of the time, but to the fact that capitalism itself still had before it a world to shape in its own image. The main capitalist states could peacefully co-exist as long as a huge market for capitalist slaves was available for colonial conquest.

THE IRATIONALITY OF WAR IN CAPITAL'S DECADENT PHASE

The first world war signalled the end of capitalism's ascending phase. The entire globe had been carved up by the various imperialist powers; now these empires of capital had no choice but to turn each other into a fortress that's armed even the ruling class itself. In the new epoch of capitalist decadence, war was no longer part of the push to expand the world market and so develop the productive forces. On the contrary it expressed the impossibility of further capitalist expansion and a tendency towards self-destruction increasingly divorced from any economic rationale.

The characteristics of the new epoch were already clearly expressed in the first world war (1). The period leading up to the war saw the complete failure of all diplomatic initiatives to prevent it; indeed, diplomacy was now reduced to the extent of manoeuvring states or blocs of states to prepare itself for war most effectively. The war itself precisely escaped the control of the war-mongers: the war-mongers were posed to be 'over by Christmas' of 1914 showed itself to be a new and more terrifying kind of war, a longer war, more extensive geographically, involving more and more of the population, civilians as well as workers in uniform, and increased by terror and bounds in destructive capacity. And following the 'peace', for both victor and vanquished, famine, epidemics, desolation after a shortened period of reconstruction, a new world economic crisis, a new sharpening of imperialist tensions, a new explosion of local wars (Abyssinia, China, Spain...), a new round of preparations for an even more devastating second conflict. The second world war did not at least three times as many human beings as the first, extended to a much wider area of the globe and intended much more extensive destruction - and massacre - of the entire population.

Like the first world war, the second was preceded by any number of 'peace agreements' and 'non-aggression pacts', all of which were as much a barrier to war as Neville Chamberlain's famous speech of 1938. And like the first, second world war the second was supposed to - at last - inaugurate a new era of international peace and cooperation. But even before it ended the very ground for the division of the world into two giant military blocs who immediately began to confront each other in a series of international incidents or proxy wars (Berlin blockade, Korea, Indochina, Middle East, etc.). The economic boom, brought about by the post-war reconstruction kept these imperialist antagonisms within certain limits. But as soon as the underlying crisis of the

capitalist system came to the surface again, the tensions between the two blocs also came into the open. And just as the crisis is accelerating beyond the control of the bourgeoisie, so the rebuilding drive towards world war is an inexorable process which cannot be halted by the 'wisest' of bourgeois statesmen.

CAPITALISM IS ON A COURSE TOWARDS SUICIDE; ONLY THE WORKERS STAND IN THE WAY

The catastrophic history of the 20th century demonstrates that decadent capitalism is objectively, irrevocably doomed to live by war. But since it is now clear that a third world war would mean the end of humanity, we are often asked that the bourgeoisie will not go to war because 'it would be irrational', because 'it would lead to its own destruction', etc. This argument is based on two false premises: that capitalism is still a rational system, even in its own terms; and that the bourgeoisie can control the slide towards war. Again history demonstrates that war in this century has made less and less economic sense to the protagonists, that it has more and more resulted in the mutual ruin of all the states who took part in it. And it also demonstrates that once the plunge towards world war has gone past a certain point, nothing on Earth will stop the bourgeoisie from using all the destructive power at its disposal.

In sum, this argument - even when it's echoed

World capital is responsible for massacre in Kurdistan

The hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie's current blather about 'peace' is nowhere more clearly and more thoroughly illustrated than in Iraq, a country which, like Iran, is supposed to have laid down its arms in the gulf armistice begun July 25. Quite apart from the fact that all countries in the Middle East have reduced their arms purchases since the announcement of the Gulf 'peace', Iraq in particular has launched a massive armed offensive against the Kurdish minority within its northern borders. This was Baghdad's most concerted attempt to wipe out the Kurdish nationalist movement, which, mainly through the 'Peshmarga' (guerrillas - literally 'those who wait for death') of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, has been operating as an ally of Iran within Iraq. Iraq's stab at this troublesome minority - a stab attempted at 'genocide' according to elements at the United Nations - has been undeniably ferocious: poison gas attacks and 'conventional' shelling and air raids on Kurdish villages, killing unknown thousands of civilians as well as Peshmarga fighters. Over 60,000 Kurds - some estimates say more like 100,000 - fled across the border to Turkey where they were eventually settled in tent cities. 80% of them were women and children.

THE BLATANT HYPOCRISY OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Now this Iraqi action has been greeted with a mounting crescendo of condemnation in the West. The US is even discussing a trade/arms embargo on Baghdad and everywhere there is talk of the 'unpleasantness' unleashed by Iraq which 'this time' has 'gone too far'.

All of which reeks of the foulest hypocrisy and can't come from the major sections of the bourgeoisie east and west. From America, above all, which through Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, encouraged and supported Iraq through its eight years of war with Iran, the aim of which, as far as Washington was concerned, was to break Khomeini's clerical regime and return Iraq as a fighting member of the western bloc on the front-line facing imperialist rival Russia. Thus when Iraq frequently used chemical weapons against Iranian troops (as documented by the UN); when it in particular deployed them in final successful offensives against Iraq this spring; when, in March this year, it used chemical bombs on the Kurdish town Halabja for 'collaboration' with the Iranians, resulting in at least 7,000 deaths and 7,000 injuries: in the face of all this the US stayed absolutely silent, said nothing. Russia too, which has supplied Baghdad with the majority of its arms for the past 20 years, issued no condemnation. Europe, which furnishes Iraq with the chemicals for its bombs, likewise remained dumb.

But with the West having achieved the subordination of Iran as signalled by its acceptance of the cease-fire, with the need to defuse Iraq's victory-morale rampaging military, the West and the US have suddenly found their conscience over the 'unpleasantness'. How timely! This new-found concern for the Kurds' cruel treatment is, of course, pure humbug, an ill-disguised veil for the West's own manoeuvrings and

by revolutionaries who have swallowed capitalism's line (2). It is just a variant of the perfidious idea that war can be averted by good sense and pious pledges. This idea isn't just wrong; it's dangerous. In fact it is now being consciously and systematically used by the ruling class to obscure the fact that today there is only one obstacle to world war: the struggle of the world working class, and in particular the working class of the central capitalist countries - its refusal to submit to the economic pauperisation and ideological intoxication required to mobilise it for war.

In the present phase within the decline of capitalism, the military blocs for the next holocaust are in place, the economic crisis is already deeper and more extensive than it was in the 30s. Only the struggle of an undefeated working class is preventing capitalism's final collapse into barbarism. Only the struggle of the working class, by raising itself to the level of the revolution, can deliver humanity from the suicidal logic of this insane system.

NOTES

- (1) For a deeper analysis of the irrationality of war in this era, see 'War, Militarism and Imperialism Blocs' in *International Review* 52 and 53.
- (2) See the polemic with Battaglia Communiste in *IR* 54.

war preparations.

We should add that the hospitable Turkish bourgeoisie, who only allowed the Kurds to settle on their soil when the glare of international publicity exposed their sordid hesitations, are evidently not so charitable to this minority at first appears. There are eight million Kurds living in southern Turkey but it is forbidden, by law to refer to them by name or to use the Kurdish language. The army, under 'President' Kenan Evren, trying to cloak itself in the veil of democracy after its 1980 coup, has been waging surveillance war on the Turkish Kurds like all leaders of the Turkish state since the 1930s.

Iraq, too, which yelped the loudest when its cadres in the KDP took a hammering, has also butchered the Kurdish minority in its own borders, especially since the Iranian Kurdish version of the KDP was operating as an ally of Iraq, as were other more radical guerrilla organisations like the Mujahideen Khaki and Komala. And Russia's attitude to Moslem Kurds within its own empire, away from the glare of global publicity currently illuminating nationalist revolt in Azerbaijan, has also been brutal.

THE TRAP OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

The Kurdish population has truly been a victim of the unbounded cynicism of a combination of imperialist powers large and small. But this doesn't alter the fact that the goal of self-government, independence, or national liberation sought by the Kurdish bourgeoisie is not just an illusion but a rallying call to massacre today.

In order to seek banking for their cause the Kurdish nationalists have been obliged to sell their 'independence', their 'freedom' to the highest, the most convenient bidder. And behind the localised bourgeois revolution, in which all such minorities are enroled, the imperialist antagonisms between the major powers Russia and America are as likely as not being played out. Divisions among the Kurdish parties themselves show that their 'movement' is hopelessly riven by existing nationalisms. 'Turkish' Kurds of the KKP (the so-called Marxist Workers Party of Kurdistan, fighting the Ankara regime since 1980) had no hesitation in stealing arms and supplies from the wretched 'Iraqi' Kurds fleeing into Turkey. Iraqi Kurdish groups ally themselves with Iran, Iranian Kurdish groups with Iraq. In all these squalid compromises, the Kurdish population itself is reduced to the status of cannon fodder.

The struggle against oppression in all its forms can no longer be fought under the banner of 'national liberation'. It can only be fought under the internationalist banner of communism, which aims for the destruction of all nation states and the creation of a world human community.

The Kurdish, Iraqi and Iranian workers who have deserted the national war fronts and opposed the carnage in the Gulf on a class basis, have practice lifted up this second banner. But it is above all the responsibility of the workers in the imperialist centres to strike a decisive blow against world capitalism's war machine.

KT 22 Sept 1988

CAPITALIST SOCIETY IS IN AN ADVANCED STATE OF DECOMPOSITION

It is becoming more and more obvious that the society we live in is in an advanced state of decomposition.

In the great urban centres of capitalism, the basic infrastructure that is supposed to ensure the smooth running of a 'civilised' society is breaking down wherever you look.

For example the road system is no longer able to cope with the amount of traffic now using the cities and highways. It is becoming increasingly stressful to drive a car in the big towns. As congestion increases, so does the rate of accidents in many western countries road accidents are among the most frequent causes of death in the population. And as safety procedures are unrolled away to meet the demands of economic competition, more and more people are dying in large-scale public transport disasters: Zeebrugge, King's Cross, Gare de Lyon, the Leningrad-Moscow express.....

For example the health services, once offered as proof that we live in a 'caring society', are being cut to the bone as the state channels its resources into what really counts: the police and the military. Cuts in the health services mean longer waiting lists and queues for medical attention, outdated equipment in hospitals, insufficient attention from overworked doctors and nurses. And yet at the same time, daily life is becoming more and more unhealthy because of unbalanced and inadequate diets because of increasing levels of toxic substances in food and water supplies; because of mounting stress brought on by the insane pace of modern life, in particular seas, the cities, the countryside, which is now reaching the level of a planetary catastrophe. Small wonder that in this noxious environment new and unmanageable diseases like AIDS begin to fester and spread.

And when we look at the state of social relations and behaviour, this breakdown, this decay, is no less evident. It needs no sociological experts to prove that the increase in alcoholism and drug addiction, especially among the young, represents a despairing attempt to blot out the misery that surrounds us. Similarly, the increase in violent crime (in Britain, a 17% increase last year, according to the official figures), while on the one hand being a direct response to economic deprivation, also expressed a drift into morbidity and nihilism in the face of a world that seems to have lost all meaning. This is particularly clear when it takes the form of 'senseless' bloodbaths like the one perpetrated in Hungerford last year.

It would not be difficult to compile a huge and depressing list of these signs of social putrefaction. And so far we have only mentioned the advanced countries. In the peripheral regions of capitalism this phenomenon takes on a more cataclysmic form, with thousands, millions, being massacred by famine, floods and earthquakes whose enormous death tolls are less the result of nature's unpredictability than of the world's operations of a profit economy. This was transparently the case with the floods in India, linked to a whole process of soil erosion through over-exploitation for the world market, and in Bangla Desh, which are attributable to the deforestation of the mountain areas organised by the international timber trade. And at the same time, very recently in the same countries, social life is being perpetually torn apart by bloody conflicts between factions of the ruling class: the gang wars in the Lebanon, the growth of nationalist divisions in eastern Europe, the so-called 'tribal' massacres in Burundi, ethnic clashes in India and Sri Lanka, death squads in Haiti and Central America, chemical genocide in Kurdistan.....

CAPITALISM TURNS ITS ROUGHNESS TO ITS OWN ADVANTAGE

The increasingly nightmarish character of daily life can't be hidden by the ruling class still to a large extent be used to good advantage in the preservation of bourgeois order.

This is why the newspapers and the TV often seem to contain little else but gory images of the latest tragedies: Flood victims in Bangla Desh, child abuse victims in Britain seals poisoned by our polluted seas, piles of corpses from the war in the Gulf. The constant harping on about these horrors has a precise aim: to fill the atomised viewer or reader with feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, of 'everything's

getting worse...and there's nothing to be done about it.'

Or else 'everything's getting worse...and here's a false solution'. From the right if the family is falling apart, if respect for religion and the law is declining, then we need to reinforce traditional moral values'. But as Nietzsche put it in one of his more lucid moments: you talk of the family, religion, morality. Be honest, gentlemen, you really mean the police. It's like a scenario from a 1930s audience-flicking movie: faced with the monsters threatening to devour civilisation as we know it, only the armed might of the state can save us now.

From the left things are bad, but they're not that bad. Change the government and we can have a pollution-free capitalism, a peaceful capitalism, a more caring NHS, a democratically accountable police.

In fact, because the solutions offered by both right and left are being increasingly exposed in all their worthlessness by the march of reality they too are only a veneer over the fundamental nihilism of bourgeois ideology today.

A MODE OF PRODUCTION IN DECLINE

Revolutionaries, communists, those who confront this social system from the standpoint of the working class, are the only ones who can counter the bourgeoisie's messages of despair by the social decomposition are different expressions of the same thing: the historical decline of all their worthless systems. Capitalist social relations - the production of all goods for sale, the wage labour system - have become a barrier to the gigantic productive themselves served to unleash. This has been the case since the beginning of the century and is what lies behind the infernal cycle of world economic crises and world wars that have marked this epoch.

But capitalist decadence itself has a history. Capitalism today is more putrid than at any time in its history. This becomes clear when you examine the destructive effects of the world wars which weas the capitalist's inability to expand into new areas of the globe (see article on war and peace in this issue); World War I, 14 million dead; World War II, 60 million dead. And World War III would mean the almost certain destruction of life on Earth.

But this spiralling 'progression' into barbarism also applies to the day to day reality of older workers who remember the hard times of the thirties say that at least people stuck together then, whereas today it's just a jungle, with every man for himself... Behind such impressions lies the reality of decades of the enforced destruction of working class communities and traditions, of an unprecedented development of atomisation imposed by the whole organisation of work, housing and leisure.

If the stench capitalism is exuding today is becoming unbearable, it's because on top of 50 years of the first two cycles of crisis, war and reconstruction we have had 20 years of an economic crisis which has been getting slowly but inexorably more profound than any previous one. It's because, at this present juncture, neither the bourgeoisie nor the working class is able to put an end to the crisis, the bourgeoisie through the war, the working class through revolution. The bourgeoisie has its hands tied because it hasn't yet inflicted a decisive defeat on the workers; the proletariat, while resisting tooth and nail the attacks on its living standards imposed by the crisis, has not yet reached the level of unity and political maturation required to overthrow the system. So as the two major classes gather their forces for a final showdown, classes (active collapse of the economic base of society is more and more dragging humanity into a bottomless pit of chaos and disintegration. The final solution or barbarism but socialism or the atomisation of present-day barbarism to its ultimate consequences.

THE PROLETARIAT MUST REBUILD SOCIETY ON THE RUINS OF CAPITALISM

For the working class, this gradual slide into barbarism is double edged. On the one hand it serves to blunt its consciousness, to weaken its

collective identity, since it is a slide into lumpenisation, individualism, and despair, atomising the numerous divisions within the class. The effect of this decomposition are especially tangible with the younger, more marginal strata of the class, who have little or no experience of collective combat.

On the other hand, because we are living in a period of the historic resurgence of workers' struggles, these negative effects are countered by a more profound reality: that the increasingly patent decay of the entire social system can also act as a spur to the struggles of the working class. We have already seen this in the reaction of the German miners to the explosion at Borsum, which left sixty of them dead. The workers angrily insisted that this was no accident but murder, and struck against the deadly conditions that had permitted the disaster to take place. Likewise with the oil-rig workers who collectively refused to go back on to the floating death traps after the explosion on the Alpha. The generalisation of capitalism's collapse to all aspects of the proletariat's condition compelled the workers to recognise the broad social and political implications of their struggles; to meditate economic defence, but about the very survival of the planet. In short, to see their present struggles as a necessary preparation for the revolutionary destruction of capitalism and the creation of a society that truly corresponds to the needs of humanity.

NO

PUBLIC MEETINGS

In the coming period the IOC in London will be alternating between meetings organised around a specific theme, and less formal open meetings for those who want to discuss any aspect of our politics. The pattern for the next three months will therefore be:

Saturday 8 October
Capitalism is a planetary disaster
Saturday 12 November
Open meeting
Saturday 10 December
1989-1993: Five years of the international class struggle

All meetings at 2.40pm, North Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Tube: Holborn)

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LETTERS

COUNTER-INFORMATION

The following letter is a reply to an appeal by the Counter-Information collective for financial aid to sustain their publication. We are publishing it here because the conception of revolutionary activity implied in the Counter-Information news bulletin raises political questions that go beyond the particularities of this group.

Dear comrades,

31.6.88

We received your appeal for money to sustain Counter-Information. Although we recognise that your bulletin attempts to look at world events from the standpoint of the working class, we can only respond negatively to this appeal.

As a communist organisation battling to make its voice heard against the enormous tide of bourgeois propaganda, we are totally committed to sustaining the various publications that we ourselves produce: papers and journals in 10 countries, a theoretical quarterly in three languages, pamphlets and leaflets. As, unlike the left wing of capital, we have no financial backing from various state agencies, and are often kept out of 'alternative' bookshops because of political positions, we are heavily dependent on our members, sympathisers and readers (a tiny minority) to support this effort. As it is we are constantly stretched financially to keep publications going: thus as an organisation we simply do not have the resources to back up your appeal.

But this is not simply a financial question: it is a political question. It is not our role to give financial assistance to other groups without there being any political relationship that enables us to see whether we are really engaged in a common project, in working for the worldwide communist revolution and for the regroupment of revolutionary forces in a world scale. Thus the IOC has helped groups of comrades who have come close to our positions to produce leaflets and papers, but we have always the result of a long political discussion, and not just of political agreement.

In the case of Counter-Information, it is very clear even from looking at its form that we have a totally different conception of the tasks of revolutionaries today. Counter-Information offers itself as a bulletin of information 'in its

WR'S LANGUAGE

Dear World Revolution,

... The major point, and no doubt you have heard this before, is the type of language that the paper is written in!

For instance, the first two paragraphs of the 'lead' article in issue number 116 are clear enough, but then in the third paragraph the writer uses such phrases as the 'epoch of capitalist decadence', 'imperialist bloc' etc. Now I know what this means, but if the readers have got through your paper, they still won't be clear on the 'meaning'. The use of this 'specific' type of writing presents problems - some ideas etc. can only be described in such a manner, but others don't need it!

A second point is the page seven 'scene' report (in this case the CWO meeting) - I find it interesting, but it's quite simply irrelevant to any 'general' readers! What is needed is a more defined linking of why the different theoretical positions affect the class struggle - as for instance was done with the DAW text and film articles of the past.

The two pieces on the textile strike and the seamen's strike were quite clear and to the point - I wonder about the 'extending the struggle', in the middle of the PAO piece, when the 'linking up of all workers in struggle' at the end of the article says the same thing, but in a more understandable way!

The other thing that I feel about the paper is the layout: is dull indeed! At least the columns are square, and the headlines readable, but it is still in two huge chunks of black and white text - you have to be 'interested' to think of making the effort to read it. Anyway, I know it's hard to say both what needs to be said whilst making it 'readable' and 'short' enough ...

Thank you for your letter. ... Such comments are important to us, as we want to have a newspaper which is of the working class, as well as for the working class.

No, you are not the first to criticise the language WR is written in or the dullness of its layout. This has been said many times before.

self', a sort of proletarian Reuters based around very vague political criteria. The vagueness of these 'principles' often mean that its articles are heavily tinged with leftist or rank and file socialist influences. But perhaps even more important, this idea of an 'information' bulletin entirely avoids the issue of the need for revolutionaries to work towards the building of an organisation of revolutionaries based on rigorous marxist principles and analyses, and in this framework to develop a revolutionary press which does not limit itself to merely observing or reporting on social events, but which aims to provide a clear political orientation to the workers' struggle.

The communist or libertarian approach to organisation which lies behind your conception of the bulletin can also be seen in the very fact that you give it away free; this seems to be simply a negative reaction to the leftist organisations for whom selling the paper becomes a thing in itself devoid of any political commitment on the part of the sellers. But a proletarian organisation that sees its work in a long term perspective and understands the vital importance of keeping its press alive in the adverse conditions of bourgeois society must recognise that there is no alternative to producing a paper that is for sale to the workers. The financial collapse of Counter-Information is in this respect a harsh but inevitable reminder of economic reality.

Our insistence on these points does not at all mean that we have no wish to engage in a political dialogue with you. As you know we wrote to you some time ago suggesting a political discussion and your initial response seems to have been positive, but we have not heard from you since then, apart from the continuing exchange of publications. We reiterate our willingness to engage in this discussion, but we make no secret of the fact that we think that the energies you have been putting into Counter-Information would be much better spent seriously reflecting on the objective situation of world capital today - the acceleration of the crisis and of capitalism's preparations for world war, the international resurgence of class struggle - and on how revolutionaries should be responding to this situation.

We look forward to your reply.

Fraternally,

for

It's a point of view which implies that if we write in a more simple fashion, used less difficult and complicated language and made the layout more interesting then we would attract more new readers and our impact on the working class would be greater. While we must (and do) make a constant effort to make WR as readable as possible in order to reach as many workers as we can, its not on this level in the main, that we are going going to develop WR as a weapon of intervention in the working class. The question of language and layout is only one aspect of the problem, and certainly not the most essential. Behind the question of clarity of language is the need for political clarity. By this we mean that the revolutionary newspaper must be both a response to the unfolding of the class struggle, reflecting the immediacy and complexity of this process, and, at the same time be able to reveal the inner logic of the class struggle and the perspectives for the workers in class. If we flow from it, if we flow from it to do this then no amount of simplicity of language or variety of layout will substitute for it. It's along the lines of being 'on top of the situation' in order to intervene in it that the revolutionary newspaper will develop, and where we must devote most of our energies.

However this doesn't mean we ignore the question of the presentation of our politics or believe it will automatically improve without any conscious effort. Such an effort is part of the fight to defend a communist point of view in the working class.

But if we treat these questions of presentation as problems in and of themselves, then we can come up with some dangerous answers. You do this when you suggest that we shouldn't use such terms as 'epoch of capitalist decadence', 'imperialist bloc' because they are too difficult or specific for workers to understand. In some situations it's true that the use of these terms can be inappropriate - for example, in an agitational leaflet calling for workers to spread their struggle - and it's certainly not a principle to use them at every opportunity. But, having said that, we must also insist that the decadence of

APPEAL TO READERS

Instead of just buying individual copies of World Revolution - take out a SUBSCRIPTION. This is a vital means of receiving money regularly, as well as for readers to guarantee getting WR as soon as its published each month. Or, as a means of giving more, take out a SUPPORTER'S SUBSCRIPTION FOR £20, either now or when renewing an existing subscription.

On top of this any constant to REGULAR DONATIONS would not only help us but also demonstrate an appreciation of the necessity for revolutionary intervention.

Alongside the need for financial contributions, the actual distribution of WR is a task that sympathetic individuals can take up - by buying/selling additional copies or servicing bookshops/newsagents not already covered.

Similarly, the distribution of our many leaflets is something with which any sympathiser can help.

But, most importantly, while practical support of any sort is extremely valuable to us, the core of our intervention assumes that the positions and analyses in WR are there to be responded to. Unlike the bourgeois press which demands only passive acceptance, we insist that class consciousness develops through the confrontation of ideas ... SO, WRITE TO US NOW!

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

- INTERNATIONAL REVIEW 54 75p
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 - * The perspective of a recession
 - * Understanding the Decadence of capitalism (4)
 - * Evolution of the political milieu (2) 78-83
 - * Underestimation of the class struggle

- INTERNATIONAL REVIEW 55 out soon
- * The 'peace' of summer 88
 - * Workers' attitudes in Poland
 - * Crisis and class struggle in Mexico
 - * Understanding the decadence of capitalism (3)
 - * Decadence of the proletarian political milieu
 - * 70 years ago: the revolution in Germany

capitalism and the division of the world into imperialist blocs are central planks in the marxist conception of the world and the reality of class struggle. They are thus at the root of the intervention of revolutionaries. We don't deny that such terms are not common currency, but to avoid using them because of that would be to erode the foundations of communist politics and dilute our intervention. You only have to look at the various spherulic communist papers - like Wildcat - to see how the pursuit of 'simple' language goes alongside a confused and opportunist approach to politics. And, of course, leftist papers often try to hide their reactionary politics behind the claim that they are using the 'language of the working class'.

Nevertheless we agree with you that it's possible to put things in a more simple and direct way, as you point to with the article on the post Office. Its also right to insist that articles on the 'peace' (otherwise known as the revolutionary milieu) should be closely related to the needs of revolutionary intervention in the class struggle. Although we think the article on the Communist Workers Organisation in Wildcat did so by exposing their lack of clarity on the nature of the present period and the development of the class struggle.

In spite of such an effort to be as readable as possible, the language of revolutionary politics will remain difficult for the majority of the working class before a revolutionary situation develops in which concepts like the decadence of capitalism and imperialism will enter into 'ordinary language'. Today many workers still have illusions in bourgeois democracy, the trade unions, the health of the capitalist economy etc, and many aren't 'interested in politics' (while still not taking part in the evolution of events). Such workers may read this paper and get to words like 'decadence', 'imperialist bloc', 'extension of the struggle' and throw it away in irritation. Here it's not the fault of the words themselves, which are a direct reflection of the marxist vision of the world, but the still present difficulty of the majority of the working class to assimilate them, hampered in either by illusions in the present system or by a distrust of all politics isolated by the present dominance of capitalist ideology. The influence of current and future class battles will awaken, in more and more workers, the desire for a marxist clarity concerning the struggles they are engaged in. Revolutionaries must prepare to meet this need today, not by abandoning difficult but essential concepts - which would be pandering to the suspicion of politics - but by learning how to bring out the truth of marxist ideas in the unfolding of events. This is the essential responsibility of the revolutionary newspaper.

WORLD REVOLUTION

ULSTER Bourgeoisie whips up sectarian divisions

The recent wave of IRA bombings and sectarian killings in Ulster has been used by the British bourgeoisie to present itself as an innocent victim of the 'men of violence', and thus to cover up the way it is cynically utilising the bombings to promote sectarian divisions within the working class.

In Ulster there are continual warnings about 'new IRA offensives' and the need for the population to be on their guard; while at the same time the state uses selective repression to scare the inhabitants of the Catholic ghettos into feeling intimidated by the RUC and the British Army. On the mainland the workers are bombarded slightly with propaganda which presents the workers in Ulster as nothing but sectarian bigots who just want to kill each other or 'our' soldiers. All of this is aimed at getting the workers in Ulster and on the mainland to see each other as enemies, and to support repressive measures of the state, instead of uniting against their common enemy, the capitalist state.

An important part of the increased security measures brought in after each terrorist attack has been the highly publicised use of the state's elite death squad, the SAS, in Ulster and Gibraltar. The use of the SAS in Ulster is not new - they have been used since 1975, when the Labour government sent them in - but the publicity about them is. The aim of all this coverage in the media is to normalise the use of the SAS, not just in Ulster, but anywhere and against whoever they decide to call a 'terrorist'. Today IRA members are gunned down ruthlessly in Ulster or Gibraltar; in the future it will be communists and workers.

Throughout this campaign the media has been extolling the efforts of the British government to find a 'solution' to the violence, especially through the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1). But, as we said when the Agreement was signed:

"Far from desiring a solution to the 'mess' in the North, this mess is fuelled in the interests of the...bourgeoisie through the covert manipulations of its illegal forces of repression, the IRA...and its legal forces of repression, the RUC and the Army, backed up by ideological campaigns like...the Anglo-Irish Agreement." (WM 90a)

The last two years have bloodily confirmed this. The loyalists, time and time again, have used their opposition to the Agreement to try to mobilise workers against this or that ministerial meeting while the nationalists have used the increased RUC/Army presence at funerals and other gatherings to whip up anti-British feelings and demonstrations. Furthermore both the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries have increased their sectarian killings and intimidation, which reached new heights in the past year, with a whole spiral of random murders in each others' areas, especially in the wake of the Gibraltar shootings.

POSITIONS OF THE ICC

WORLD REVOLUTION is the section in Britain of the INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST CURRENT.

We ICC trace its origins in the successive contributions of the Communist League, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Internationals, and the left fractions which detached themselves from the latter, in particular the German, Dutch and Italian left.

Today the ICC defends the following basic positions, fundamental lessons of the historic struggle of the working class:

- Since World War 1, capitalism has been a decadent social system which has nothing to offer the working class and humanity as a whole except cycles of crises, wars and reconstruction. Its irreparable historical decay poses the single alternative for humanity: socialism or barbarism.
- The working class is the only class capable of overthrowing the capitalist revolution against capitalism.
- The revolutionary struggle of the proletariat must inevitably lead the working class to a confrontation with the capitalist state. In destroying the capitalist state, the working class will have to set up the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale.
- The form of this dictatorship is the international power of the workers' councils.
- Socialism, the mode of social reproduction initiated by the workers' councils, is not 'workers'

This is hardly the 'pacified' situation the Agreement was supposed to introduce.

THE BOURGEOISIE RESPONDS TO THE DANGER OF WORKERS' UNITY

The reason why the bourgeoisie has organised such a frenzied campaign around this latest IRA offensive was only...he grasped fully by placing Ulster in the international context of the economic crisis and the class struggle.

Under the pressure of a deepening recession, the British bourgeoisie, along with its cohorts in the rest of the world, has launched a massive attack on the proletariat. And in Ulster this attack is hitting working class areas, although

mainly comes from the Protestant areas, is losing its importance as a means of encouraging those workers to feel 'privileged'. This represents a real equalisation of misery in Ulster.

This equalisation is taking place at a time when the workers in Ulster have demonstrated that they are an active part of the resurgence of class struggle in Britain and internationally. During the February wave of struggle healthworkers and seamen in the Province struggled alongside their class comrades on the mainland, just as the 80 workers in Ulster had been part of that strike. The seamen had to face the iron fist of the state on two occasions, when armed ROC officers smashed their way onto a ship occupied by the strikers. The strike by Harland and Shorts workers in support of the healthworkers (who mainly come from the Catholic ghettos) on the 14 March - though it was for only two hours and in the confines of a union rally - showed the potential for unity across sectarian divisions, especially when the workers roared their approval of a speaker who said that the rally showed that class unity exists in Ulster. This roar of class unity must have chilled the very marrow of the bourgeoisie.

In front of this potential it is no wonder that the bourgeoisie is doing all it can to whip up sectarianism...it is for this reason that the paramilitaries are allowed to exist. Their bloody campaigns serve the interests of the ruling class very nicely, because they help to divide the working class. As we said in WM 179: "If the IRA and the Protestant paramilitaries didn't exist to give the British state this valuable aid, they would have to be invented."

The extreme left wing of the bourgeoisie also play their role in the campaign to divide the class, especially on the mainland. All of the leftists, from the SWP to the DAW, call on the workers to support the IRA as 'anti-imperialist', while denouncing the workers from the Protestant areas as 'bigots', 'reactionaries', etc - basically any vile slander to turn worker against worker aimed to block any attempt to unite across the sectarian divide.

Far from being the innocent victim of the 'men of violence', the capitalist state will not shrink from using and manipulating any method of terror to stir up sectarian divisions in Ulster. As we have seen the workers are not just sitting back and letting the ruling class get away with it, and are beginning to show the potential for class unity. But given the scale of the campaign being mounted against them, which is based on the real historical weight of sectarianism within the Ulster working class, the workers of the Province will only be able to withstand this massive ideological and economic attack with the fraternal aid of the workers on the mainland. The best example workers in the rest of Britain can give to those in Ulster is to move towards the unification of their own struggles against capital and its state.

THE NOTE (1) The bourgeois campaign about how the Agreement is aimed at pacifying the situation has really influenced a part of the revolutionary milieu itself in Workers' Voice of the CWO who said that 'Only the CWO pointed out that the Agreement signalled a concerted attempt by the entire western ruling class to pacify the situation in Ulster.' Unfortunately, it's not just the CWO who say this, but the 'extreme western ruling class'...

'popular fronts' or 'united fronts' between the proletariat and any faction of the bourgeoisie can only serve to derail the struggle of the proletariat and disarm it in the face of the class enemy.

● So-called 'national liberation struggles' are moments in the deadly struggle between imperialist powers large and small to gain control over the world market. The slogans of 'support for people in struggle' amount, in fact, to defending one imperialist power against another under nationalist or 'socialist' wrappings.

● The role of the revolutionary organisation is not to 'organize the working class' nor to take power 'on behalf of the workers' but to participate actively in the generalisation of proletarian struggles and revolutionary consciousness within the proletariat.

ACTIVITY OF THE ICC

● The vital theoretical elaboration demanded by the re-examining of the proletarian struggle after fifty years of counter-revolution.

- Organised intervention, on an international scale, in the struggles of the proletariat, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the self-organisation and revolutionary action of the working class.

Nationalism means death to workers' struggles

suffers the worst unemployment rates in Europe, and loss of the worst housing. With the recent announcement of the 'privatisation' of both shipyard and Völk shipyards and Shorts aeroplane the workers there are now faced with the prospect of up to another 30,000 industrial jobs going to the two firms are the biggest industrial employers in the Province). And this is on top of the other recent attacks: social wage in April, enforced workday in September...

These attacks are laying the basis for the workers of Ulster to unite across all sectarian divisions. The demands of the crisis are eroding the last material differences between the workers: the relatively better pay given to the workers of Harland and similar enterprises, who

self management' nor the 'nationalisation of the economy'. Socialism requires the complete abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations such as wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers: it means the construction of the world human community.

● The so-called 'workers parties' (Russia, the Eastern Bloc, China, Cuba, etc) are a particular expression of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, (itself an expression of the decline of capitalism). There are no 'socialist' countries on this planet and the above countries are just as any capitalist nation: which the world proletariat will have to destroy along with all other capitalist states.

In this epoch the trade unions everywhere are organs of capitalist discipline within the proletariat.

● All the so-called 'workers parties' (the 'Communist' and 'Socialist' parties as well as their 'leftist' appendages) are the 'left' of capitalism's political apparatus.

● In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but sources of capitalist mystification: any participation in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce this mystification in the eyes of the proletariat.

- Today, all fractions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. Any tactics which call for



World Revolution

40p

Massacres in Bosnia They intervene, not to protect the innocent, but to protect their imperialist interests

Srebrenica: after months of Serbian siege, 2,000 are dead from disease, starvation, snipers and shells. The threat of an even bigger bloodbath hangs over the population as the Serbian forces move in for a new orgy of ethnic cleansing.

Vitez, central Bosnia: more ethnic cleansing of Muslims, this time by Croatian forces. ("British soldiers tell of seeing civilians runned down in cold blood; of finding a young boy clutching his puppy, both shot at close range; of women who were being clung to their babies" (Guardian, 22 April). On the TV news, ghastly filmed evidence of whole Muslim families having been burned to death in their homes in the village of Ahmici. In response, "the Muslims have been torching villages and expelling and terrorising Croats from areas they control" (ibid).

This horror, this pitiless massacre, has been going on for nearly two years in ex-Yugoslavia. And it still seems incredible that it should be taking place so close to the great urban centres of western Europe. For the vast majority of the European popula-

tion, for the proletariat, this slaughter seems senseless, obscene, unjustifiable. There is a widespread feeling that it should be stopped, that "something" has to be done and fast.

The governments, politicians and media of the western powers claim to share these sentiments. All condemn the killing of innocent civilians, the mass rapes, the concentration camps. And they give considerable air and column space to the great debate on what to do: tougher sanctions against Serbia (the official British view); selective air strikes (Lord Owen); arm the Muslims (Thatcher); send in NATO troops (Paddy Ashdown). In the US, the issue isn't over whether to intervene, but when and in who's name. But however much they disagree on how to go about intervening in the situation, all of them advertise their deep humanitarian concern for the suffering population of Bosnia.

But who are these great humanitarians, these good souls so anxious about the loss of innocent lives? Are they not the same individuals, parties, media and governments who cheered 'our boys' in 1991, when the US and British armed forces unleashed a real holocaust in the Gulf, wiping out more people in the space of a few weeks than

have been killed throughout the war in ex-Yugoslavia? How much concern did Clinton, Thatcher, Ashdown and all the rest of them show for the Iraqi children blown up by allied 'smart bombs', or sentenced to a slow death by starvation and disease because the bombing of Iraq destroyed its health, transport and sanitation systems?

And aren't these same 'humanitarian' and democratic powers, these defenders of the great western values, the same states who have been fuelling the war in ex-Yugoslavia from the beginning, using the various local factions as

proxies? It's simply because the game has moved on. Today America's number one need isn't to halt a Croatian advance, but to impose its direct political and military authority as the world's policeman, in a region of vital strategic importance. The highlighting of Serbian atrocities is a pretext for making a display of force that will serve this end.

Thus, if the USA, despite all the various obstacles, disagreements and delays, is moving closer and closer to a major intervention in the Balkans, its aim is to defend its own imperialist interests: to maintain its position as the world's only superpower and to stop the emergence of a new imperialist alignment led by



research-rival Germany. By the same token, if America's principal rivals, Germany and France, have

acid so far to block a major US intervention, it's not out of any reluctance to use military force, but because it's not in their interests to see the USA implant itself too deeply in the region. The same rule applies

when, as seems more and more likely, these countries start going along with the US, and get ready to take part in any intervention in Bosnia: it's only to make sure that they don't get left out and are able to carry off playing their own cards in the conflict.

In short, what motivates the actions of the great capitalist states is not the desire to protect innocent lives, but to protect their own selfish imperialist interests.

But many well-meaning people will still respond: surely, if lives are saved by a military intervention, does it matter what the underlying motives are?

To which we can only reply that the deployment of UN forces in Bosnia hasn't stopped the slaughter so far; neither did the presence of 50,000 US troops in Somalia bring any relief to the stricken population there. A more massive military intervention, through air strikes or the use of ground troops, would in all probability only extend the massacre. And even if, in the short term, and at considerable cost, military intervention did bring about a cease-fire, it is crucial to understand that any such intervention would represent a step towards an even greater

Faced with a continuing barrage of attacks on its living standards, sustained unemployment at massive levels and not a shred of evidence for the supposed economic recovery, the working class is showing a growing anger and militancy that holds the promise of massive struggles to come. A Valgo speaker at a rally in Leeds on April 2 said: "this government has attacked all workers at the same time, something Mrs Thatcher was never stupid enough to do." It was possible up to a point for the government to manage the attacks of the eighties because of the level of the economic crisis. In the nineties there is no alternative for the bourgeoisie but to try and make the working class in every sector suffer the effects of capitalism's crisis at the same time. It is because of this that there is such a potential for a unified response from right across the working class. It is also the case for unions to wheel out their repertoire of divisive actions.

Unions divide the struggle. Take the two big strike days of April 2 and 16, involving miners, railworkers, busworkers and workers in the public sector. On the surface, holding these strikes on the same day gave the impression that the unions want to organise a class-wide fight against unemployment and the effects of the crisis. But in fact the unions made damn sure that the demonstrations held on these days were badly publicised and dispersed, in contrast to last October when the massive demonstrations acted as such a focus for workers throughout the country.

Subsequently, ASLEF and the RMT unions have combined endless talks with British Rail with votes on strikes and the one day actions. But here again, the unions have acted to divide up the workers: ASLEF took on the job of settling separately from the RMT, thus creating a split between the train drivers and other BR workers.

As for the miners, the NUM continues to divert the struggle against pit closures into a campaign for public support that does nothing to defend their jobs. The miners now know that 19 of the threatened pits are still to be closed and the other 12 could go within a year. Meanwhile on April 2 Arthur Scargill reassured a rally in Barnsley that "We've achieved the objective we wanted - to focus attention on the disgraceful behaviour of this government in closing down the coal mines. In reality, seeking 'public support' is a sure-fire way of sabotaging what the miners really need: class solidarity from other workers."

Then there's the example of the firefighters. For the last 17 years their pay has been linked to the average pay of public sector workers. Kenneth Clarke wants to scrap this arrangement and impose the 1.5% pay limit that's being pushed

Continued on page 2

Continued on page 4

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 8

Continued on page 10

Continued on page 12

Continued on page 14

Continued on page 16

Continued on page 18

Continued on page 20

Continued on page 22

Continued on page 24

Continued on page 26

Continued on page 28

Continued on page 30

Continued on page 32

Continued on page 34

Continued on page 36

Continued on page 38

Continued on page 40

Continued on page 42

Continued on page 44

Continued on page 46

Continued on page 48

Continued on page 50

Continued on page 52

Continued on page 54

Continued on page 56

Continued on page 58

Continued on page 60

Continued on page 62

Continued on page 64

Continued on page 66

Continued on page 68

Continued on page 70

Continued on page 72

Continued on page 74

Continued on page 76

Continued on page 78

Continued on page 80

Continued on page 82

Continued on page 84

Continued on page 86

Continued on page 88

Continued on page 90

Continued on page 92

Continued on page 94

Continued on page 96

Continued on page 98

Continued on page 100

Continued on page 102

Continued on page 104

Continued on page 106

Continued on page 108

Continued on page 110

Continued on page 112

Continued on page 114

Continued on page 116

Continued on page 118

Continued on page 120

Continued on page 122

Continued on page 124

Continued on page 126

Continued on page 128

Continued on page 130

Continued on page 132

Continued on page 134

Continued on page 136

Continued on page 138

Continued on page 140

Continued on page 142

Continued on page 144

Continued on page 146

Continued on page 148

Continued on page 150

Continued on page 152

Continued on page 154

Continued on page 156

Continued on page 158

Continued on page 160

Continued on page 162

Continued on page 164

Continued on page 166

Continued on page 168

Continued on page 170

Continued on page 172

Continued on page 174

Continued on page 176

Continued on page 178

Continued on page 180

Continued on page 182

Continued on page 184

Continued on page 186

Continued on page 188

Continued on page 190

Continued on page 192

Continued on page 194

Continued on page 196

Continued on page 198

Continued on page 200

Continued on page 202

Continued on page 204

Continued on page 206

Continued on page 208

Continued on page 210

Continued on page 212

Continued on page 214

Continued on page 216

Continued on page 218

Continued on page 220

Continued on page 222

Continued on page 224

Continued on page 226

Continued on page 228

Continued on page 230

Continued on page 232

Continued on page 234

Continued on page 236

Continued on page 238

Continued on page 240

Continued on page 242

Continued on page 244

Continued on page 246

Continued on page 248

Continued on page 250

Continued on page 252

Continued on page 254

Continued on page 256

Continued on page 258

Continued on page 260

Continued on page 262

Continued on page 264

Continued on page 266

Continued on page 268

Continued on page 270

Continued on page 272

Continued on page 274

Continued on page 276

Continued on page 278

Continued on page 280

Continued on page 282

Continued on page 284

Continued on page 286

Continued on page 288

Continued on page 290

Continued on page 292

Continued on page 294

Continued on page 296

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Continued on page 300

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Continued on page 326

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Continued on page 330

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Continued on page 338

Continued on page 340

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Continued on page 350

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Continued on page 444

Continued on page 446

Continued on page 448

Continued on page 450

Continued on page 452

Continued on page 454

Continued on page 456

Continued on page 458

Continued on page 460

Continued on page 462

Continued on page 464

Continued on page 466

Faise revolutionaries rob workers of their perspective

Workers will no longer tolerate the torrent of attacks on their jobs, pay and working conditions. After three years of quiescence there is a new mood of struggle not just in Britain but across Europe.

However, it is a very difficult road for workers to recover the solidarity and confidence they achieved in the 1980s. To renew confidence in working class solidarity also means recovering the perspective of the class struggle: communist revolution.

The development of such a perspective can't take place without the determined intervention of revolutionary organisations, which are specifically formed to forge the connection between the immediate and the historic dimensions of the class struggle, between defensive economic movements and the political struggle against capitalism as a whole.

Workers looking for a revolutionary political organisation will find dozens of groups which claim to be doing that. But most of these will be found offering critical support to the worst enemies of the working class, the unions and the left wing parties. Every campaign of the ruling

class has an extreme left version that is designed to prevent workers breaking from the logic of bourgeois politics.

Working class solidarity or public opinion? Last October, when the closure of 31 mines was announced and workers' anger was immediately expressed in two massive demonstrations, the great mystification used to keep control was that of 'public opinion'. Everyone was supposed to be on the miners' side, including Tory rebels such as Winston Churchill.

Scargill's tactic at this point was no longer to play the radical union leader but to tell the miners that it would all be fine because they had public opinion on their side. And this tactic has been used against militant workers here ever since.

It is pushed enthusiastically by Socialist Workers. 'The Tories know strikers are popular and the government is not.... Far from alienating public opinion, the widespread anger against the Tories means industrial action gets wide support.' (Editorial about the rail workers and miners one day strikes, 17th April).

For workers' interests or the defence of nationalised industries? Alongside public opinion goes the lie to that support for workers' interests means support for the industry, with slogans like "Love British Coal" or "COHSSE stands for the NHS" stickers. Are we supposed to have forgotten that British Coal and the NHS are the boss just because they are owned by the state?

In this vein the SWP encourages teachers to see their struggle not as part of the struggle of the working class, but as a public spirited effort on behalf of the education of "the majority of children": "Teachers have had enough of the Tories wrecking the education system." (Front page lead, 10th April).

Similarly they want to turn struggles in defence of jobs and wages on London buses and the railway into "action against privatisation" and thus in defence of the state sector.

Extension of struggles, or the long isolated strike? The leftists do not only call for campaigns for public opinion. They call for strike action - but strictly within the union logic of sectionalism and isolation.

For the rail workers: "we do need all out indignant strike action." (SWP 24th April). This sounds very militant in relation to the union one day strikes, but without a call for the struggle to spread it can only further the unions' efforts to split up workers' resistance to the attacks on their living conditions. This is even clearer when it comes to the Times dispute.

The advice the leftists give the Times workers locked out by their bosses is that in addition to collections of money, "Union leaders should organise systematic blacking off of Times prodgers." (SWP 10th April). And when the Socialist Workers Party lives up to its radical image by talk of breaking the law with secondary picketing it is simply in support of the Times' control

aims of preventing the recruitment of scabs and support for blacking.

Such calls to action are calls to remain trapped in the logic of the isolated dispute in one factory. The experience of the 1980s shows that this is the way to defeat, as in the year long miners' strike and the Wapping dispute.

Where workers extended their struggles, as in Poland in 1980 or Belgium in 1983 and 1986, even austerity plans decreed by the state could be delayed. And in Britain in July 1989 when the struggles of bus, tube, council and other workers occurred at the same time and there was a very real potential for these to unite, workers made some gains.

Communist revolution, or a Labour government?

There is a coherence to all the false tactics of the leftists as the class struggle wakes up. It is to channel the growing anger in the working class into support for the Labour Party, in the form of anti-Trotskyist, Socialist Worker theories that see the supposed diary of the government: "I've upset the pressure, this rabble would see it", (10th April) or "The power to beat the Tories" (17th April).

This attitude characterises all the leftists. Even Workers Power, which polemics bitterly against the other leftist groups and talks of "why it is necessary to fight capitalism itself", is based on this logic: "The Tories are reeling from one crisis to another. They are weaker than they have ever been. They are ripe for the taking." (Workers Power 166). With this framework all their invective against the Labour leadership is great for sounding militant, but will only help to mystify the working class. When the leftist groups try to sell these false perspectives to the working class, they work to rob us of our most vital weapon: a clear consciousness of what's really at stake in the class struggle. AF

'Recovery': an illusion fueled by debt

Twelve months ago the Tories won a general election and predicted that it would give an impetus to the reemergence of 'green shoots' of recovery. The economy had been lacking in that vital ingredient, confidence, which would be revived with the election out of the way. The media eulogised the Tory victory and perused the various indices for evidence of the recovery. It never came. Output continued to contract, unemployment continued to mushroom, and there was a slump in the housing market and in retail sales. The economy was suffering from high interest rates and an over-valued pound trapped in the straight-jacket of the ERM.

In September the pound's artificial value was at which has been in the red since 1981 and the government's indebtedness during the 90s. In the last 12 months the deficit on the balance of payments is about £13 billion, or over 2% of GDP. Furthermore, it's predicted it will reach 3% in the next two years. And even the bourgeoisie's economic 'experts' are clear that the British economy's manufacturing base is now far too small to provide a launchpad out of recession. And if it's true that the 'escape' from the ERM has brought the government some short-term dividends (cutting interest rates has made borrowing cheaper for companies and the large devaluation of sterling has benefited exporters) next 12 months' Secretary to the Treasury Michael Portillo's review of the social security, health, education and law and order budgets is due soon and public sector workers have been promised even harder attacks through more cuts, more unemployment.

The 'green shoots' of recovery which have appeared will provide no benefits for the working class. Indeed the longer term worsening of the state of the British economy by the current measures ensures that the attacks against the class will have to intensify. If it's bad today, it will be doubly bad tomorrow, as the budget projections indicate. Furthermore, the government may try to postpone the downward spiral of the British economy by massaging it with its budgetary and monetary mechanisms to combat the crisis. But there can be no recovery in a world economy which is suffocating from global overproduction and saturated markets. After 25 years of breaking the law with secondary picketing it is simply in support of the Times' control

balance of payments figures, in spite of the relative improvement of competitiveness caused by the collapse of the pound. The only way to avoid this will be to resort to more protectionist measures for the economy. Protectionism is growing in all the major industrial countries, which only puts greater pressures on the existing international trade agreements and can only exacerbate the growing chaos in the world financial system.

However the British bourgeoisie cannot solve its problems with devaluations, indexation or protectionist barriers, although, like all bourgeoisies it will use them to draw the working class in behind the defence of national interests. British capitalists still has to engage in ferocious competition in the marketplace with its major competitors and it can only do this effectively by escalating further its attacks on the working class. The on-going haemorrhage of jobs produces the continual search for greater productivity within the workplace. The squeeze on public sector wage settlements at 1% for this year is an effective wage cut when inflation is running at 4% or more. In fact the threat of unemployment is being used to get workers to trade real cuts in wages for job protection (eg Sheffield Labour council's settlement with its workforces). And with the postponement of extra taxes in the budget, there must be some brutal cuts made in government spending in the next 12 months.

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throughout the public sector. The Fire Brigade Union has started talks with the local authority employers and, although the settlement date isn't until November, the FBUI leaders already say a strike is inevitable. The 'radicalism' of the SWP goes as far as saying "the battle should be launched immediately after the FBUI conference in May." (Socialist Worker 17/4/93). No doubt there will be bolder souls demanding 'ballot now!' or even 'strike now!' What some of the unionists will propose is any action that will link up the struggles of workers across the divisions of different industries.

The teachers are also faced with enticements to take 'militant' action. The various new texts that the government are introducing will mean an enormous amount of extra work for teachers. This increased pressure on conditions for already harassed workers can be a basis for struggle - but only if it is directly linked to other issues that teachers have in common with all other workers. The union's boycott, however, is couched entirely in terms of the defence of state education and the 'profession' of teaching. The NAS/UNW has led this campaign - straight into the capitalist law-courts, following Scargill's example of last autumn.

On top of all this is the recent lack of Gillian Shepherd's letter proposing a ban on strikes in the public sector. We can expect a whole rash of campaigns in defence of 'trade union rights' and the 'right to strike'.

Workers need to unite the struggles! What workers need is not yet another union campaign but to take charge of their own struggles and spread them as broadly as possible. This means holding mass meetings with the aim of discussing how to push forward the struggle, organising delegations to go to other groups of workers, calling demonstrations that will involve as many workers as possible. For the struggle to stand any chance of advancing there has to be a break with the union charades of ballots, token actions, isolated strikes, appeals to the law courts and public opinion. Instead workers must develop methods of struggle that really express the needs and potential of our class as a revolutionary force in this decaying society. LA

Britain's GDP slumped by 4% in the period from mid-1990 to the end of 1992 (0.3% in 1992 itself). There were tens of thousands of business bankruptcies and a massive rolling programme of redundancies which extends into this year and the next. The ERM debacle didn't help since it is estimated to have cost the government £5 billion in its attempts to defend the pound against the speculators. The apparent stabilisation of the British economy was achieved by an escalation in large scale borrowing. (This was criticised by Major his treasury for growth). The final tally of this borrowing at the end of the financial year was £36.5 billion

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Workers hav

"And as the world appears as a huge free-for-all, where behind the fine speeches about the 'world order', international 'peace' and 'cooperation', 'solidarity' and 'justice' for the poor-est, every nation is in fact out for itself; where sharpening imperialist rivalries find expression not just in economic competition, but in war" (Manifesto of the 9th Congress of the ICC).

Faced with the increasing inter-ethnic slaughter around the world, from ex-Yugoslavia, through the Caucasus, to the ex-Soviet republics of Central Asia; faced with the machinations and moves towards intervention from the major powers; faced with the threat of the whole planet sliding more and more into war and destruction, it is more vital than ever for the working class to assert its independence and its own interests against the increasingly irrational national and imperialist interests of its exploiters, because it alone carries a perspective for the future of humanity. The watchwords of the workers' movement, "workers have no country" and "proletarians of the world unite", far from being outmoded concepts, as bourgeois propagandists would have us believe, have assumed a greater truth and urgency.

Workers must oppose all 'national' wars. Last century, in the context of the expansion and development of capitalism - and thus of the working class - the proletariat could and did support wars for the constitution of new nation states and against the forces of reaction, eg the struggle for Italian unification and the American Civil War. But unlike the last century, workers in the period of declining capitalism have to oppose all national struggles. In a world that has

been carved up by the great imperialist powers, "the nation is but a cloak that covers imperialist desires, a hush cry for imperialist rivalries, the last ideological measure with which the masses can be persuaded to play the role of cannon fodder in imperialist war" (Rosa Luxemburg, The Janus Pamphlet, 1915).

If this was true when capitalism plunged into its permanent epoch of crisis and war at the beginning of the century, it's even more true today as the system rises on its feet.

We can see this by observing the effects of capitalism's decomposition on the "new" nations of the 60's and 70's, nations formed by the "national liberation struggles" so fervently supported by the left, by the Stalinists and particularly the Trotskyists. Throughout Africa, these "young" capitalists, far from providing a basis for the expansion of the world economy, form an almost continuous disaster area of war, disease, starvation and ecological devastation. Far from being a factor of economic unification, these countries are disintegrating into less and less viable units. From the beginning of the century the numbers of nation states has gone from around 50 to over 150, and the collapse of the USSR and its satellite regimes threatens to add many more new states. The consequences are evident: more armies; more countries falling under the reign of armed gangs; more fighting over more and more ridiculous frontiers - at a time when the problems facing humanity can only be tackled by breaking down frontiers and creating a global community.

All states are imperialist. This explosion of nationalist tendencies, even from the smallest "statelet", in no way calls into

Warsaw 1943, Bosnia 1993:

The grand alibis of democracy

Fifty years ago, in April 1943, the last inhabitants of the Warsaw Ghetto staged a desperate revolt against the German army of occupation. Nearly 400,000 Jews had already either been carted off to the death camps or had perished from starvation and disease. But when the German army entered the ghetto to deal with those that were left, they were met with furious resistance as a thousand young Jews fought with Molotov cocktails and pistols to defend a further 60,000 old people and children hidden in basements. After being surprised and driven back by the defenders, the Nazi High Command ordered the ghetto to be razed to the ground.

The bourgeoisie and its media commemorate this heroic if tragic rebellion in its own way and for its own interests. The Israeli state presents itself as the ghetto of the Middle East, holding out against overwhelming odds. In this self-portrait, Israel's brutal treatment of the Palestinians is inverted into the struggle of an oppressed minority fighting for its very survival... On the extreme left, the revolt is held up as a model of real, popular anti-fascism, even as a symbol of internationalism (cf Socialist Worker, 17 April). In fact, the revolt, like the more general Warsaw uprising of 1944, took place in conditions where there was no longer any basis for a proletarian, and thus a real internationalist response to the imperialist war. Rather it was the last ditch stand of a population with its back to the wall, and as such it could not escape the logic of nationalism and the anti-fascist resistance.

But the main message being sold in the recent commemorations of the uprising concerns the indifference of the 'democratic' allies to the fate of European Jewry. Clear parallels are drawn between this and the attitude of the 'West' to the slaughter in ex-Yugoslavia. In an article in the Guardian of 19-4-93, the last surviving member of the committee that led the uprising, Marek Edelman, is quoted as saying "What is going on in Yugoslavia is Hitler's victory from beyond the grave. And the Western countries, beyond their wordly declarations, are doing the same thing as they did before".

Such articles and exposes don't conceal the fact that the Allies were perfectly well aware of the existence of the death camps and chose to do nothing about them. For example, proposals to bomb the railways leading to the camps were turned down flat. Similarly, most of the great democracies slammed their doors shut to the flood of Jewish refugees before, during and after the war. In one notorious case, an offer by the Nazis in Rumania to swap one million Jews for a fleet of trucks was summarily rejected. As the British negotiating official put it: "What would we do with a million Jews?"

But what the bourgeois press is less willing to tell us is that although the Allies kept quiet about the Holocaust for most of the time it was going on, they publicised it to the utmost at the end of the war. The reason for this is that the war crimes of Nazism provided the perfect alibi for the war crimes of the democracies - crimes that became particularly monstrous at the end of the war. The terror bombing of German cities - including Dresden which demonstrably had no military installations at all - was cynically aimed at crushing the German working class and stifling any danger of a revolutionary rising in the defeated powers, as had happened at the end of World War One. To hide the blood that smeared their counter-revolutionary hands, the democracies pointed to the piles of corpses in Auschwitz and Treblinka, blaming the entire German people for the depredations of the German ruling class, and justifying their own holocaust against the proletarians of Germany, Italy and Japan.

And today, the complaints about the indifference of the democracies in World War Two, the calls to learn the lessons of the Warsaw uprising and do something about the genocide going on in the Balkans, serve an equally sinister end: to justify the moves towards an intervention in this region by the 'democratic' imperialisms. Once again, the victims of imperialist war suffer a double martyrdom: after being massacred by one side in the carnage, their very deaths are used to whitewash even greater massacres. CDW

Continued from page 1

They intervene, not to protect the innocent, but to protect their imperialist interests

collapse of society that cannily drag humanity into increasingly bloody wars. The only force countering this descent into self-destruction is the class struggle of the proletariat. The more workers fight for their own demands, their own living conditions, the harder it is for the bourgeoisie to mobilise society for war. The more workers in all countries recognise their common interests as an exploited class, the harder it is for the bourgeoisie to drag them off to the battle fronts in the defence of the fatherland. This was proved positively in 1917-18 when it was the workers' strikes, mutinies and revolutionary uprisings that brought the world war to an abrupt end. It is proved negatively in ex-Yugoslavia today. A few years ago, Serbian, Croatian and Muslim workers were striking and demonstrating side by side against the attacks of the Yugoslav capitalist state. Today they have been dragged onto the terrain of their enemy, the terrain of nationalism, and are being slaughtered in their thousands. Failing for the phony unity of nation, religion or ethnic group has been a catastrophe for the working class of this region. This should serve as a warning to the workers in the central capitalist countries. If we swallow the 'humanitarian' excuses of our exploiters, if we let them persuade us that there is a common interest between the working class and the capitalist state, if we are fooled into supporting the military expeditions of the ruling class, we will be signing our own death warrants in the long run. We will be delivering ourselves, bound hand and foot, to the capitalist war machine.

The working class of the western European countries cannot be indifferent to the horrors being perpetrated in ex-Yugoslavia, not least because they provide a glimpse of what capitalism will do to the whole planet if it is not destroyed in time. But against the emotive appeals of our class enemy, we have to affirm that the only way to stop the descent into military barbarism is to increase the class divide in all countries, to fight massively against the capitalist state and all its agents. The more the proletariat fights for its own interests at the very heart of the imperialist world order, the more hope there is of providing an example and an inspiration to those workers in the peripheral areas who are at present caught up in the wheels of nationalism, ethnic conflict and war. But above all, by drawing up the battle lines on class terms, workers in the central countries can begin to raise the banner of revolution, the banner of a new society, free forever from the criminal absurdity of national frontiers and fratricidal wars. *WR 24.4.93*

Public Meetings:

Only the class struggle can put an end to wars and barbarism

Exeter: 29th May 2.30pm
St Georges Hall, Market St.

London: 15th May 2.30pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn Tube)

An open meeting will also be held on the 19th June at the same address at 2.30 pm

Manchester: 12th June,
Details to be advertised in "Front Line" bookshop

French elections: the Right carries on the Left's dirty work

The recent elections in France saw the defeat of the 'Socialist' Party after a decade in power and the triumphant return of the right to government. This has been described as an 'historical turning point' for the population of France.

But what does this so-called change actually mean for the population and, above all, for the working class?

The orientation of the Balladur government is in fact exactly the same as its predecessors - Mauroy, Fabius, Rocard and Cresson (all 'Socialist' prime ministers). The new government will only develop and strengthen the same anti-working class policy carried out by the 'Socialists' for over 10 years.

This policy is not specific to this or that party of the ruling class, but is dictated by the needs of the national capital. In France, as with every other country, the policy of draconian austerity is an imperative for the bourgeoisie, regardless of the party in power.

Arguing that it needs to reconstruct an economy which the left's 'bad management' had plunged into chaos, the new government aims at:

- reducing the state budget deficit, which will take the form of unprecedented attacks on jobs and wages in the public sector;
- reducing the huge deficit of the Securite Sociale, which means more attacks on health care, which has already suffered enormously under the Socialist government;
- reducing pensions and unemployment benefits.

Yet again it's the working class that's going to foot the bill: with tax rises, a wage freeze and increased exploitation for the workers who are 'lucky' enough to still have a job.

And as for the perspective of a return to growth in the economy that's been promised by the newly elected government on the grounds that the new austerity package will reduce unemployment, it's a rotten lie. The sacrifice that they are asking workers to accept today are only starters compared to the ones to come. Neither left nor right has any miracle recipe to get any national capital out of the abyss of the world recession.

Today the 'Socialists' are presenting themselves as genuine defenders of 'real democracy,' wailing about the right parties being in power and saying that they represent a threat to the 'human rights' and 'social gains' painstakingly fought for by the left.

Workers everywhere should never forget what these so-called Socialists did when they were at the head of the French state:

- hundreds of thousands of lay-offs in the private sector and tens of thousands in the public sector

- dramatic increases in the cost of healthcare while decreasing and in some cases stopping redundancy money for an ever growing mass of homeless in the very heart of the big cities.

But the 'Socialist' management of French capitalism was not limited to a policy of ruthless attacks against working class living standards.

It is thanks to these zealous defenders of 'democracy' and 'human rights' that we saw the active participation of the military apparatus of French imperialism in the gruesome 'Desert Storm' operation which left 300,000 dead and plunged the whole population of Iraq into horrendous terror.

This is all without mentioning the whole series of military involvements in Chad, Zaïre, Rwanda, Cambodia, Somalia or ex-Yugoslavia - all equally in the name of 'humanitarian aid' to victims of barbarous governments.

These 'Socialists' have nothing to learn from any right wing party. The true nature of the left is no different from any other part of capitalism's political apparatus in its ruthless domination over society: an ever increasing misery, terror and exploitation.

Workers must remember that it is only through their own methods of struggle that they will be able to defend their class interests. In the coming period, with the international resurgence of class struggle, they can more and more expect to find left factions of the bourgeoisie pretending to be in opposition to right wing government teams. The right is quite capable of continuing the dirty work of a left that has relinquished power. The left, meanwhile, has an important job in the sabotage of workers' struggles from within. *MK*

continued from facing page
in every country's press shows that the ruling class does not feel under threat.

The Working Class Lives!

This brings us to the third factor — the retreat of the working class in the last decade. Although the ruling class in every country appears to be divided and squabbling the one certain factor to unite them would be the threat of a major working class upheaval. Its absence and the fact that the workers have taken all the attacks of the last ten years relatively mildly further explains why the bosses are now beginning to wash their dirty linen in public. However such an exercise is fraught with danger. As Trotsky once noted the three factors necessary for a successful revolutionary fight are

1. An economic crisis which hits the living standards of the working class.
2. A serious split in the ruling class and
3. A combative and conscious working class regrouped around a revolutionary party.

Under present conditions only the third factor is missing. After years of retreat however the signs are that the working class is coming to the end of its tether. There is a new willingness to fight even in the most hopeless of struggles. At the same time the economic crisis has become sectional but this could also be the platform for a new and more general resistance. Communists have to prepare for this by fighting for a revolutionary consciousness within each of these sections. The danger of every country is that in the period ahead to focus attention on the reform enemy, the capitalist system and not be side-tracked by false campaigns from Labour and the leftists to restructure and cleanse its state. Corruption and incompetence are only the symptoms of the deeper crisis of the system. Our consciousness and our self-organisation can finish it off.

When the US marines went into Somalia last December, Western propaganda claimed that this was a move to disarm the warring factions and promote peace in this desperate part of the world. Yet the so called "Operation Restore Hope" was at best a last ditch publicity stunt by outgoing President Bush. It also had the more serious function to warn the whole world that America has the capacity to strike anywhere. Just like the recent bombing of Baghdad, the unambiguous message is that you don't mess with the US. The hypocrisy of Western intervention is only too evident as just like Bosnia, Iraq and a dozen other places, the crisis in

During the Cold War Somalia received substantial funds and arms. Originally these came from the USSR but when the latter started supporting the Islamic fundamentalist regime of Muqdishu turned to the US. When the Cold War ended, the West no longer had any direct interest in Somalia and withdrew economic aid. The Somali civil war in 1978 corresponded to the end of the Cold War. Siyad Barre's regime collapsed and was succeeded by warlordism as the country was divided into fiefdoms. The warlords fought over meagre resources. The only things imperialism left them with in plenty were weapons. The economic situation was made worse by famine, which was largely caused by the war. The capitalist class of farming which deprived substantial sections of the peasantry of their previous means of subsistence. With agriculture in ruins the country was reduced to a state of dependency. Aid shipments a highly prized commodity for the local ruling class gangsters. We now see the sickening irony of the imperialist policies which have brought Somalia to the brink of total economic rescue. But in the twisted world of capitalist

Pickets, Violence and the State

So long as capitalism continues so will class struggle. Class conscious workers recognise that and so do the bosses. When workers start to fight they have to throw off their normal ideological shackles and organise strikes, pickets, occupations, demonstrations, leafletting, defence squads, 'hit squads' and whatever other weapons of class struggle are available.

Lined up against the workers is the whole armoury which theruling class keeps on permanent stand-by. This armoury of bourgeois class struggle is the state machine. Every day the ruling class prepares for class struggle not just through its visible Parliamentary law-making but also through the machinations of the military, the police, the secret service, the intelligence gathering by the Civil Service and Local Authorities etc. etc.

Those workers who attended the Times or Middlebrook mass pickets witnessed the reality of the state's claim to a monopoly of legal violence. It was no surprise that the police used the usual combination of direct and well-trained physical force backed up by the full legal apparatus to ensure that scabs would be able to enter the factory.

Workers who want to exercise our class power on the picket line, of course, feel frustrated as the bosses' police attack our pickets arresting as they see fit. It is time some basic lessons were re-learned.

When the police attack our pickets we must learn to resist. Linking arms and packing ourselves tightly will provide some resistance to the flying wedge and the snatch squads. Individual workers should avoid where possible any confrontation with cops on picket lines.

Ideology and appearances are usually false and belie a more sordid reality. The US and subsequent UN armies in Somalia have behaved just like an army of occupation, suppressing and massacring the local population as evidenced by the recent shooting of civilians demonstrating against the UN presence. In short the population of Mogadishu are almost as likely to be murdered by UN troops as they are the local ruling class bandits. Such is the nature of "peace keeping in the New World Order". This shows that the UN is merely an extension of US interests. However that is not all. What is happening in Somalia is part of a more general pattern.

The Pakistani soldiers shot by Aided's troops had no armoured vehicles unlike their British counterparts in Bosnia. The UN is chronically short of money and has been asked by the US/RUS to pay their dues. Troops of the Ukrainian contingent in Bosnia have been so broke because their state has not passed on their share of the oil that they have had to live on their food. The same is features can be seen in Cambodia where Bulgarians have been the main victims of the Khmer Rouge attacks. Contrast this with the US troops in Bosnia who have had a dash at the same time as carrying out policies much more central to its imperialist interests such as blitzing Baghdad. In places like Bosnia and Kosovo the US has been able to get away with where the US is main interest is to stop the rise of a German bloc it is much cheaper for the USA to use the often badly trained and equipped UN troops than to send its own army. This is not an insignificant factor in the US decision to pursue with reducing the enormous American budget deficit. This is imperialism in crisis, imperialism on the cheap. Contrary to the usual view that the Balkan region is the theatre of regional conflicts we are now seeing as caused

by "evil individuals" such as Saddam Hussein or General Aidede in Somalia, but are the result of factions of the ruling class desperate to hold onto their wealth and power in the face of economic collapse. In Somalia the UN is increasingly becoming just one more murderous faction representing American and Western interests. (This also explains the absence of a significant UN intervention in Bosnia as the West is divided over who to support).

The calls of the liberal pundits for [United Nations] free from Western domination is nothing but utopian nonsense. An institution created by imperialist powers will always serve their interests. Workers should not be deluded into expecting the UN to intervene in a neutral manner against capitalism. The only socialism that characterises capitalism in its present phase. What we are seeing is the beginning of the break up of real concerned UN action. Though the UN has been established as a peacekeeping and the UN will increasingly become a diplomatic arena for manoeuvring as the crisis drives the old alliances apart. In the meantime each country believes can gain if something in the competitive area of international imperialism. The only real threat to the capitalist world system is the rise of Enfeebled and disorganised as it is present it alone through its position as the producing class has the power to stop capitalism driving the world towards disaster. This can only be done by speeches or leaflets but by united actions, including strikes and demonstrations.

The only real instrument against imperialism war is the workers' movement. It is from this perspective that the CWO joined the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party and the various groups of the working class wherever we can

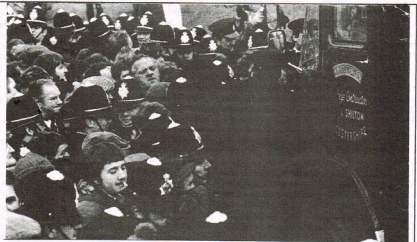
PBD

The most advanced workers will continue to learn the lessons, both positive and negative of

every moment in the class struggle. Those lessons will be continually discussed and refined until the class itself is consciously armed with all that is necessary to overthrow the bosses and their state in all its guises.

A duty of Internationalist Communists is to help develop our class's awareness which will prepare the move from today's impotence to tomorrow's classless and oppression-free future.

KT



Saltley Gates 1974: As the class struggle steps up, mass picketting will not, in itself, be enough to defeat the bosses. Mass solidarity action is the only way to defeat the state.

Revolutionaries and the Unions

Introduction

The following article is the text of a speech a comrade from the CWO gave to a meeting of the Sheffield Revolutionary Study Circle. This is a circle of workers and unemployed which some of our comrades participate alongside members of other revolutionary tendencies. The speech was part of a debate with Dave Douglas of Class War, a full-time miner and a NUM delegate at Hatfield Main. It would be pleasant if we could record a meeting of minds but there was not. What it showed is that many in the anarchist or syndicalist milieu have never heard of the positions of the Communist Left. As a result their veery arguments against Trotskyists' manipulative practices made little impact. We also found that instead of addressing our arguments they resorted to ouvrierist demagoguery and shouting comrades down. This has only convinced us that we have a job to do to make the positions of the Communist Left more widely known. We hope this text will give pause for thought to those anarchists who attended the debate and we invite responses from any reader.

Tonight I am speaking for the Communist Workers Organisation which is the British affiliate to an internationalist organisation called the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party. This is not an insignificant declaration since it is within this framework that I will be arguing about the nature of unions and the nature of revolution.

The Origins of Unions and the Formation of the working class

Unions have never been revolutionary. At the dawn of capitalism (and even today in the countries on the periphery of capitalism) unions sometimes seem as though they might be. However the brutality with which primitive capitalist set-ups attacks the first attempts by workers to organise themselves against capitalism shouldn't be allowed to hide the fact that unions are perfectly compatible with capitalism and that today they represent one of the best means for the capitalists to keep the workers struggles in check.

We know that historically the capitalists attacked the first attempts at "revolutionisation" by the workers (the first combination act banning unions was in the 1720s in Britain, the French equivalent which emerged during the French Revolution was the Loi Le Chapelier of 1790). We know too that the unions in Britain were formally legalised after the quasi-communists following the Napoleonic Wars although the ruling class message didn't reach the magistrates in Dorchester by the 1830s when they sentenced the Tolpuddle Martyrs for taking illegal oaths. The unions have lived on this episode ever since.

The First International

Marx in the 1850s and 1860s saw the unions as "schools of socialism" especially as they seemed about the only means by which the working class could organise independently of all capitalist parties. And this I think is a central point in our revolutionary statements today. The history of the working class is the struggle to break free from bourgeois domination, to find ways of organising which didn't depend on some ruling class party like the Liberals. This is also why union leaders like Odger and Cramer were

originally seen as important by Marx in the founding of the IWMA in 1864. The fact that they only joined the First International to stop strike breaking labour being brought in from France or that Napoleon III, Emperor of the French had paid for the French trade unions to attend the first meeting didn't deter Marx from taking part in what he saw as a step forward in the real movement in the working class. It also represented a step forward in his thinking too. First, for the Rules of the International Working Men's Association, he wrote the famous line that

The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves

by which he meant that the workers needed their own independent political party and the First International was just that.

Second he began to realise that there were indeed limitations to the vision of trades unionists especially the New Model trades unionists of the labour aristocracy he was associated with then. In fact Cramer and Odger both broke with him and Cramer became a Liberal MP. Marx began to take issue with those who represented one or other form of bourgeois ideology inside the working class. One of these was a British "theoretician" called Weston. He argued that it was useless workers pursuing higher wage claims because the capitalists just passed it back in higher prices. Such thoughts have been echoed by many a twentieth century union leader at various times (especially when a Labour Government has been in power). Marx took up the intellectual cudgels to wipe out this basically capitalist message. In his concluding reply in Wages, Prices and Profits he stated that it was now time for the working class to go beyond the trades union slogan of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and instead inscribe upon its banners the revolutionary watchword "abolition of the wages system".

Social Democracy and Trades Unionism

However this message was still ahead of its time. Marxist revolutionaries on the continent now took the lead in extending unions beyond the skilled working class to include all workers. This brought millions of workers into contact with social democratic politics in the late nineteenth century. But social democracy was an ambiguous movement. It contained both revolutionary and reformist elements. It was reformist, like Luxembourg and Lenin and what were thought to be reformists, like David, Legien and Noske in Germany. Many thought though that when it came to the crunch social democracy would become revolutionary. Many who doubted it actually joined in syndicalist organisations particularly in France, Spain and Italy.

But capitalism was changing. By the beginning of this century the concentration of capital had reached such heights that capitalist competition had transformed to an international level. We call this the era of imperialism. Capitalist crises could no longer be solved by mere slumps but only through imperialist war. This was obvious to revolutionaries at the time and they foresaw the Second International to pass resolutions that in the event of war every national section would call for a general strike and resistance.

In the event they did the opposite. Syndicalists and Social democrats alike soon showed what side they were on in the class war. Whilst social democratic parties voted for war funds for their governments, trades unions of all types entered into a "union sacrée", a holy alliance with their own capitalist governments. Not only did they promise no strikes throughout the war, they accepted dilution so that wages fell, and they helped organise conscription. This was a real turning point in the class struggle.

Trades Unions and the Russian Revolution

And it was no mistake or aberration. The First World War was eventually brought to a halt by working class insurrection and revolution. Strikes, riots and mutinies in Britain, France, Germany and Italy were superseded by the two revolutions in Russia in 1917. This started the

greatest international revolutionary wave in the history of the working class.

And what role did the unions play in all this? Well in the Russian revolution they were for the most part swept aside because the workers expressed themselves through different, revolutionary organisations such as the factory committees, the militias and above all the soviets. The latter arose from a need to unite strikes beyond single industries in the 1905 revolution and in 1917 they re-emerged as the form of workers revolutionary government. The only role that unions played as unions was to call for strikes against the soviets after October 1917 (e.g. the bank workers and the railway workers union which was led by Mensheviks).

But if there role in Russia was undistinguished it was downright reactionary in Germany. It was the union leader Noske who conspired with the crypto-fascist Freikorps to massacre the revolutionary workers. It was the German trades unionists who prevented Rosa Luxemburg from addressing a workers council in 1918 because she was in Gavin Laid's words "an outsider". No doubt similar thoughts went through the minds of Thomas and Co. when the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin told them in 1926 that they alone had the power to save the British Constitution or else it was those outside No. 10 who would rule the country. But we can talk about the General Strike later.

From this time henceforth there has been little pretence that the unions have been anything but bastions of the capitalist order organised inside the working class. They defended the imperialist war in 1919 and have become more and more integrated into the apparatus of the ruling class. In times of class quiet (as now) they can often get away with appearing outside the system for the extension of world revolution. But what of the unions? Well we have already spoken about their support for the capitalist in imperialist war but this is only the logical culmination of their everyday policies. Their sectionalism is more ntd when faced with foreign workers! They are the first to campaign for protectionism, for national economic recovery (and in the 1970s when Labour was in power), for austerity. They will be the allies of the capitalist state when the situation is at its most desperate. This is why we cannot simply ignore their existence.

Unions today

Lets have a look at some traditional arguments about unions.

1. The unions are OK but the leaders are bad. A funny argument since there have never been good leaders. The point is that the unions are neither the representatives of the rank and file nor neutral organisations. They represent the capitalist structure for integrating the militant into the daily grind of negotiating wage rates and redundancies. How many workers have elected a really militant comrade to represent them only to find that bit by bit they have become a union that begins to speak a different language. Soon they are on the greedy pole to the top. This doesn't happen in isolated cases. This is the norm.

2. Create Red, revolutionary or otherwise trades unions. Another nonsense. A permanent mass organisation of workers cannot exist without entering into negotiations with the bosses and in such position at the end of the struggle they try to regroup those who see that there is a wider struggle ahead on a clear political revolutionary platform inside and outside the workplace. This has the aim of politically preparing wider sections of the class for what needs to be done in the future. We cannot all this, without conscious anti-capitalist organisation we will never create a society in which the free development of each is the basic condition for the free development of us all.

3. Unification and extension of strikes and other struggles. Today this is the fundamental need. Workers can be picked off section by section. Unions aren't neutral in this. They positively fight against it. The examples are legion. Dave Douglas's own pamphlet "Reflected Perspective" talks of the dockworkers at Immingham during the 1984-5 strike as "spineless bastards". This may have some truth in it but in one who refuses to criticise his own union this is also the language of sectionalism. What about the stupid bastards in the NUM who accepted the slogan "Coal not Dole". A slogan which condemned the miners to isolation. After all, if the struggle was

just about coal then why should other workers join in? This is what we mean by sectionalism.

The examples are legion. Bill Sims the ISYC leader who refused to give solidarity to the miners in 1984 despite their support for the steelworkers in 1980 and the way in which the AUEW have sought to isolate Times are just two.

The nature of the struggle is also important. Underground workers in 1980 actually won their demands. How? By having a strike committee that was recallable, mass meetings open to all, greater involvement of everyone, and active solidarity with BR workers. Today unions are hostile to this. The bureaucracy plays on the union situation (and its amazing how many workers actually believe that this is a barrier to action) but when the chips are really down there has never been a successful legal struggle in Britain. By now the message should be clear - real class struggle recognises neither union nor legal restraint. Again unions are not neutral - the legal restraint. At the Doncaster meeting in February discussed in Workers Voice 63 the proposal to form a strike committee across South Yorkshire independently put by CWO members and members of the Doncaster Solidarity Group (which Dave supports) was attacked by the only union full-time present as a proposal for revolution. We wish it had been! It is just another example of the unions acting as policemen inside the working class struggle.

5. Last of all but perhaps it should have been first of all the revolution has to be international. The histories of the Paris Commune and the October Revolution show that the revolution cannot be confined to overthrowing one set of capitalists within a national area. Until we have paralysed imperialism by our strikes, our demonstrations, and our sabotage we will never be in a position for the extension of world revolution. But what of the unions? Well we have already spoken about their support for the capitalist in imperialist war but this is only the logical culmination of their everyday policies. Their sectionalism is more ntd when faced with foreign workers! They are the first to campaign for protectionism, for national economic recovery (and in the 1970s when Labour was in power), for austerity. They will be the allies of the capitalist state when the situation is at its most desperate. This is why we cannot simply ignore their existence.

Conclusion

We haven't the time to develop all the necessary arguments suggested here - the discussion will do that. The final question is - how do revolutionaries relate to the unions given that 8 million workers are still in them? First of all we remain in the same position as before. This gives us the opportunity to argue against all the horrendous aspects of unions in any form which presents itself. We argue for everyone irrespective of union affiliation to be in the struggle and for elected, recallable and controllable strike committees. We accept no elected post except under 2 conditions a) it is an ongoing struggle b) a clear declaration of our political views. We abandon all such position at the end of the struggle but try to regroup those who see that there is a wider struggle ahead on a clear political revolutionary platform inside and outside the workplace. This has the aim of politically preparing wider sections of the class for what needs to be done in the future. We cannot all this, without conscious anti-capitalist organisation we will never create a society in which the free development of each is the basic condition for the free development of us all.



Letters to the Editor

Editorial debate and discussion are the lifeblood of any organisation which wishes to be part of the formation of a revolutionary class consciousness. Workers' Voice appeals to all readers to become an active part of that process by sending in their comments and criticisms. All will be printed (with initials only) and where necessary replies furnished.

Timex and the Unions

Dear Comrades

On yesterday's mass picket at the Dundee Timex plant I read a copy of your leaflet with interest. Whilst I agree with the need to intensify the fight at Timex I remain to be convinced that the union is somehow the main obstacle to winning solidarity action. Of course, union leaders will always sell out struggles and of course militant unionism or Scarpill-type syndicalism won't bring down the capitalist state. However to argue as you do that "the union organisations have to be cut out of the process" begs the question — how do you intend to reach wide layers of workers without working in the only existing mass working class organisations at present?

Like it or not it is a fact that the main reason the Timex workers have maintained solid pickets for three months and been able to publicise their dispute nationally through speaking tours etc. over the heads of the bosses' media is that Timex was one of the best (union) organised engineering plants in Britain.

One final question. Would you advocate that communists who are miners or firefighters (for example) refuse on principle to join union mass meetings or abstain from union-sponsored ballots for strike action?

I would therefore like to know more about the Communist Workers' Organisation and its politics. Perhaps you could send me a sample of your paper to clarify for me the other positions you hold.

Yours in solidarity,

RM

Our Reply

Dear R.
Thanks for your response to the leaflet which we find both serious and welcome since it gives us the chance to clarify the issues you raise.

We don't think unions are the main obstacles to winning solidarity action. That rests in the consciousness of the workers themselves. The unions can only get away with their tricks to contain the struggle within their (capitalist) framework so long as the workers let them. In the past the formation of trades unions by workers was part of the process of the working class defining itself as a class, becoming as Marx said a class in itself. Today though capitalism has reached a situation in which it cannot develop the productive capacity of humanity without at the same time inflicting war, famine and ever greater misery on the working class. In such a historical situation trades unions are not simply inadequate but their attempts to confine struggles to single trades or sections is a positive barrier to the working class becoming the revolutionary class which can create a new world system in the interests of humanity. This is why we constantly advocate that workers take the struggles back into their own hands (even if they start off in the terms that trades unions dictate).

Timex is a case in point. We disagree with your "fact" that Timex has been such a heroic fight because it was one of the best union organised engineering plants in Britain. It is true that the workers there have received better support from their union than most have over the last decade or so but this is not just a reward for past loyalty to the union but also because Timex workers themselves were prepared to take their struggle to other workers. What they failed to do was to link up with other workers in struggle and this again takes us back to the nature of trades unionism. The Timex workers didn't link up with the Yarrow workers or the Leyland Daf workers on Clydeside nor with the miners and railworkers and none of these have yet generalised their struggles to take in the fact that every struggle today is for all workers. This is what our constant message is.

The second part of our message is that workers themselves have to run their own strikes and disputes and they must find means other than the unions to do this because today the unions

are organisations of permanent accommodation with capitalism. Funds used to pay pensions to fulltime officials are hardly likely to be used, as they were in the last century for an out and out struggle by the workers who have paid into them.

Finally to take up the issue of our position regarding what individual members of the CWO do in relation to the struggles of our class. In our Statutes we state that members are not only allowed to join unions but positively encouraged to do so wherever this gives them a greater possibility of an audience inside the working class. If you can only go to a meeting if you are a union member then it would be ridiculous to abstain from doing so (and we can then call for the meetings to open to all workers and for links with other sectors as well as suggesting ways which break down workers dependence on the unions). However we have no illusions about capturing the leadership of such unions since we have all seen that such attempts only compromise the would-be revolutionary. The unions don't suffer simply from bad leadership as the Trotskyists pretend but are capitalist structures which drain the lifeblood from rank and file militants who become dependent on them. Again our statutes allow members to sit on strike committees but only as recallable delegates and always making clear their political sympathies. We want to be part of the open process of the development of class consciousness and not part of some trick to con workers into following a programme they don't accept (we leave that to the Stalinists and Trotskyists).

We obviously can't answer all your questions fully without further discussion but we are sending you some of our past publications including the text of a speech a comrade recently made in a debate with Dave Douglass of **Class War** on this issue. We intend to edit this for publication in *Workers' Voice* 67 (due out soon). Also enclosed is a copy of the second leaflet we have given out at Timex (today).

Internationalist communist greetings

Jack

(for the CWO).

(Page 4 of this issue).

Labour and the Unions — Keeping up the Union-trick

Following their fourth successive General Election defeat the leaders of the Labour Party again started searching for a magic formula to con enough people into voting for them next time around.

Alongside the usual Parliamentary games of saying little about the other political parties they went in for the other old favourite of selecting a new leader, although this time they managed to select one with a level of charisma about equal to a soggy sponge pudding. The new leadership promptly showed its worth by being the star turn in the Hyde Park mass diversion of the fight against the mine closures.

The general thrust of the political posturing shows no signs of any significant change. Vague and ill-defined commitments to the remnants of the post-1945 welfare state are combined with calls for increased state intervention to increase the profitability of British capitalism. There are also clearly instances where by, for example, opposing cuts to spending on the armed forces and calls for increased intervention in ex-Yugoslavia they are prepared to outdo the Government in the ideological and practical preparations for the drift to war.

In order to stay within the mainstream of ruling-class thought they remain as keen as ever to distance themselves from the myth of 'Union Power', one of the great bogeys which the mass media use to terrify the electors. This struggle to pacify the media barons has caused tensions between the Trade Union leaders who leech off

working class subscriptions and the Labour Party leaders who are based on (largely) working class votes.

In the run-up to the Party election in the autumn it is clear that there will be a continuing wave of hot air in the papers and on the TV about the financial and political relationship between the Labour and the Unions. On the one hand the centre of the Party leadership and certain Union leaders such as the AEEU will campaign against the Union block vote in order to maintain the distance from the 'Union Power' allegations.

In the alternative camp there are other MP's who believe that they can gain power by appealing to more traditional Labourism even to the point of posturing as fighters in the class struggle. That group of windbags, with the 'Campaign' group and their leftist cheerleaders at the centre, will form a bloc with those Trade Union leaders who believe that they might lose their perceived influence and consequently risk losing yet more of their subscription base.

It is of course clear to Marxists and probably equally to the Labour and Trade Union parasites that this debate is precisely about form rather than substance. Quite simply, their roles as two pillars of bourgeois society is not based on the Labour Party's internal voting systems but in their combined and parallel tasks of leading workers into safe capitalist practices.

Ever since the inception of the party the Union machines and the Labour Parliamentarians have

maintained a symbiotic relationship. Whether they happen to be leaning to the right or the left both wings of the Labour movement have tied workers into capitalism.

The reality of the 'beer and sandwiches at No. 10' syndrome has been the Unions acting as recruitment sergeants in two world wars, the strikes of the early 1970's being defused by a Labour Government in 1974, and a string of austerity plans, social contracts, compacts etc. stretching out over the last 70 years. For those who may have forgotten it was the Callaghan-Healey cuts of the 1977-8 period which prepared the way for the attacks of the Thatcher period. The working class resistance of the winter of discontent in 1979 only demonstrated to the ruling class (which encompasses all the parliamentary parties) that Labour would not be the instrument to attack the class base. They could be saved until class militancy became too strong. Up to now they have not been needed but the cries from the likes of the Socialist Workers' Party and the Trotskyists entryist groups to "Get the Tories Out" is entirely within the game plan of the capitalists. Whilst they might talk about being "revolutionary" these Labour hangers on are just the next wave of bourgeois mystification which the workers will have to see through. But all these manoeuvres and lies can only work so long as the working class itself remains passive in the face of the attacks from all sides.

The Labour Party and Trade Unions both depend on a combination of working class passivity and decades of misrepresentation of the real nature

of bourgeois society to hide the necessity for writing a new constitution to overthrow the decadent capitalist order.

The various factions within the Trade Union and Labour leadership may well keep on shadow boxing for some time.

Whatever the outcome we know that if they achieve a parliamentary majority all factions will make sure that the workers are still bound hand and foot to the bosses and their system.

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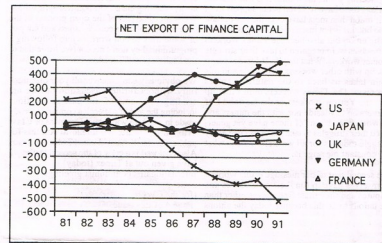
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Imperialism

The New World Order

The "victory of the West" in the cold war has not and could not open a new era of peace, for imperialism has not gone with the collapse of one imperialist power (Russia is still imperialist, but the boundaries of its spheres of influence have virtually retreated within the frontiers of the old USSR).

The same economic base continues to exist and the conflict supported by it must also continue, even if the probable sides in the conflict have changed. At the moment the surviving major imperialist powers co-operate to plunder the produce of the world's proletariat. But this "peaceful" division of the world is merely the precondition for a warlike redvision.



The charts displayed here supply some evidence for the need for this redvision. The net export of finance capital is clearly a measure of the strength of an economy as imperialist. It reflects the ability of an economy to generate capital (or drain it from elsewhere in a previous round of export) and offer it at more "generous" terms than the importer's capitalists, despite any barriers the importing country might erect.

And there has been a veritable revolution here. From being the world's largest exporter of finance capital in 1981, the US imported in 1991 roughly three times as much as it previously exported, and Germany and Japan both exported in 1991 roughly twice what the US exported a decade earlier.

The figures regarding state indebtedness reveal both the extent to which the crisis is hitting the state and how far away from classical liberalism capitalism has come — rather than cutting back on state "interference" in the economy, the state sinks into debt because that interference is vital.

Having had this brief glance at the actual figures which demonstrate the instability of capitalism (but do not in any way determine the fine detail of that instability), we can now look at some of the world's recent history.

Iraq: an Exception?

Was Iraq a potential exception to the rule that a national state is no longer able to utilise national independence to develop economic independence? After all, it defied all the "coalition" forces in the Gulf War, apparently to defend that independence.

The answer has to be no.

We must first remember that Iraq's military might was built up by the West because it was their agent. It was the CIA in 1980 who urged him to attack Iran to defend US interests. But when it became clear that Iraq was becoming a regional imperialist power on the back of that support, the West (which had a profitable arms trade with Iraq until then) pulled the plug. Saddam's regime was left only with debt.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was motivated by its need to settle its debt to Kuwait (through the invasion itself) and to the major imperialists (by exploiting the Kuwaiti oilfields and the proletarians working there). In short, annexation was to satisfy the imperialists' thirst for extra profits and not to thwart that thirst. Repudiation of debts was never seen by the Iraqi bourgeoisie as an option.

What worried the US in the Gulf conflict was the particular rôle played by Iraq within the framework of imperialism. If Iraq was allowed to continue that relative freedom granted to it when the US and its allies needed it in an entirely different situation (that is, in the context of a world dominated by the conflict between the US and USSR imperialism and of a Middle East the stability of which was threatened by the Iranian

sustain that belief until the reality breaks in: will try and solve the crisis by forcing each other to pay an unacceptable part of the cost.

A Return to Colonialism?

Because the USSR was economically the weaker imperialism, it was less able to dominate its sphere of influence primarily by economic means. In order to function as an imperialism at all, it was compelled to resort to military domination of Eastern Europe.

As the US appears to be destined to be economically weaker than Japan and Germany in certain senses (technologically and in terms of profitability, although the mass of US capital will be greater for some time to come), does this mean that the US too will now be forced to resort to direct military domination? The answer appears to be yes, as evidenced by Grenada, which is admittedly somewhat peripheral, Panama, which is clearly vital to US interests, and Somalia, despite the complicating factor of UN involvement.

The Somali case is particularly interesting. Given that the US is not there to supply humanitarian aid (such a purpose would be unprecedented in the history of imperialism), what are they there for? The answer appears to be that it is imperialism on the cheap — the US seeks to demonstrate its power where it can do so in order to discipline others into accepting US world domination. More intractable problems like Bosnia and Cambodia find no US intervention. These are left to a weak UN to try to deal with.

The Future...

Marxism is not an aid to clairvoyance which enables its adherents to predict the future with infinite precision without doing any work. What it does enable us to do is put empirical evidence into a framework which lays down the limits within which the creativity of history must go about its business. Although the "space" between these limits can never be reduced to zero, the more work that is done the narrower the gap becomes.

From a general perspective we can see that although war is inevitable under imperialism, generalised war between imperialists will not happen until certain conditions have been fulfilled. Firstly, the powers have to become convinced that they cannot manage the crisis peacefully, negotiating the share the burden they will inflict on each other. As, in reality, they cannot peacefully manage the crisis, it is inevitable that they realise that, and they will seek to force each other to take more and more. The first stage in this is the drift towards trade war. This is already happening (the long drawn out failure to reach a GATT agreement is itself due to imperialist manoeuvring). The second stage is when trade war becomes war.

Secondly, the protagonists must be of roughly equal strength, as, if a power cannot hope to win against a stronger antagonist, it will retreat and look for allies, and it will tend to find them, the stronger power will in general have more enemies. This process is one of manoeuvring prior to war, and it will become more and more discernible in the future.

In reality, this separation of the process is somewhat schematic as these phases tend to occur together.

Becoming more concrete, the weakening of the US economy vis-à-vis Germany and Japan is a material basis for conflict, because its weaker economy no longer "justifies" its domination. On the other hand, the weakening should not be over emphasised. Neither Germany nor Japan has at its disposal the mass of resources necessary to take on the US on its own. This does not mean that the basis for the conflict is removed, but it does mean that both Germany and Japan need allies in that conflict.

There can be no certainty here, but there seems to be three possibilities. First, Japan and Germany reach an understanding against the US; from its recent return to China (incidentally, present-day Japanese penetration there differs immensely from the 30's military adventures — today it is on a base of economic superiority, and not to "protect" Manchuria etc. from more developed powers) and other neighbours and faces the US like Germany preserves itself for conflict at a later stage; third, the rôles of Germany and Japan are reversed, with Germany relying on the EC (or more likely a ramp of the EC) and whatever allies it can gather in Eastern Europe.

It should not be forgotten that there is a time bomb ticking away in the crisis-ridden countries of the former USSR.

...and Who Pays for it

The working class is already paying for capitalism's crisis in a hundred and one ways. The bourgeoisie of each imperialism rubs its hands when it is able to draw workers into its competition. For example, the US has compensated for its relatively antiquated productive apparatus (one survey some years ago put the average age of US industrial plant at 25 years, of German plant at 10 years and the figure for Japan was 8 years!) by depressing wages. According to the

Economist, the average real hourly wage of US workers has decreased by 15% over the past decade, while West German and Japanese workers had small increases (more than offset, without a doubt, by increases in exploitation). But just this shows the way for Japanese and German bosses to perform the same trick and deprive the US of this particular competitive advantage by pushing their "workers" wages down.

And if workers do not develop the capacity to fight the bosses' little tricks in the trade war, and

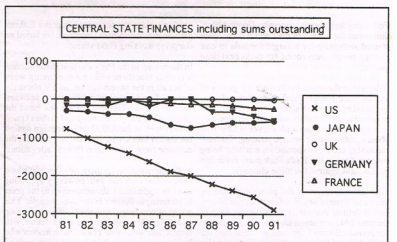
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Ex-Yugoslavia

Here the conflicts between the imperialists are becoming more visible although they are still contained within the consensus. Germany, and to a lesser extent other powers like Italy, supported the drawing of relatively developed Croatia and Slovenia away from the Yugoslav federation, as these republics provided a better environment for export of capital (see *Workers' Voice* 58). On the other hand, the US at first opposed this split, in order to impede Germany's interests, and later, when it became a question of preempting an intervention by Europe, supported the UN's entry. How little the US is really opposed to Serbia's attempts to grab territory and put a spoke in Germany's wheel is revealed by its past insistence that the arms embargo applies as much to Bosnia as to Serbia. This meant that Bosnia remained handicapped by its previous poor military resources, while Serbia retained its military advantage.

Germany wants Bosnia to be a buffer state to shelter Croatia while it drains value from this country, while the US wants a stable situation not dominated by Germany or the EC. But both Germany and the US are constrained by the desire to avoid open conflict between themselves, so both hide their support for the local forces behind the UN's intervention, and the US wants to avoid the early annihilation of Bosnia, and so has reversed its earlier policy of advocating the blockade.

However, this desire to avoid face to face confrontation is dependent on the sustaining of their crisis peacefully, negotiating which portion of the burden each carries, and they can only



fight the bosses' little tricks in the trade war, and

Aid to Russia won't buy stability

At the Tokyo meeting of the G7 in April, the 7 most powerful countries in the world announced a \$43 Billion aid package to Russia. This is nearly double the \$24 billion package they set up at last year's Summit in Munich. However, before we start to feel that at long last the world leaders are getting together to do something about the terrible situation in Russia and that may be this could lead to greater cooperation over Yugoslavia it is necessary to look behind all the fine words. When we do, any feeling of confidence in the ruling class's abilities to set up for the good of humanity will soon be dispelled.

The announcement of this aid package has



been timed to coincide with Yeltsin's referendum campaign. As such it is very much a propaganda exercise. In fact much of the money has been announced previously, and much is simply a renegotiation of debt repayments.

Behind 'Western unity', bitter imperialist conflict
"The new package should be helping hand" (A Japanese official at the Tokyo meeting). This image of a united 'west' helping out Russia is very reassuring after months of growing economic and political tensions between the countries of the West. However, this common 'concern' for the situation in Russia does not mark a growing cooperation, but a moment where imperialist interests coincide.

Confronted with the accelerating destabilisation

of Russia over last winter which held out the prospect of its economic and political collapse, the major powers had to do something. Such a disintegration "could plunge Russia into the chaos that has overtaken the Balkans", as a foreign policy adviser to President Clinton was quoted as saying. Moreover, this chaos would be on a far larger scale and be amplified by the promise of nuclear weapons. The whole of Asia and Eastern Europe would be sucked into it.

If, faced with this threat, the major powers were able to agree an aid package for Russia, this in no way means the tensions between them are lessening. Far from it. Just as the growing chaos in Russia is the product of the

The conflicts between the major powers accelerate chaos, but this is not a conscious policy. In order to carry out their imperialist ambitions, the great powers don't want to see their potential sphere of influence descend into chaos nor to find themselves hit by the fall-out from such destabilisation.

The insanity of trying to stabilise a situation in order to better confront one's enemies is taken one step further in the case of Russia. This is because Russia has gone from being the US's main enemy to being its ally. Thus, when Germany and Japan agree to aid Russia they are supporting one of their main rivals and strengthening the hand of the US.

The US cannot allow this massive arsenal, over 7,500 nuclear war heads and tens of thousands of tactical weapons, shells, mines etc, to fall into the hands of its enemies. Neither Germany nor Japan possess nuclear weapons. The US also wants to stop them going to its other more secondary rivals.

Russia also plays an important role in American imperialism's geopolitical strategy against its enemies. It acts as a counter weight to Germany in Eastern Europe, and to Japan and China in the Far East. It may no longer be a super power, and its military machine is limping along, but it is still a force to be reckoned with by its neighbours.

The Russian Defence Minister, General Grachev, has also made it clear that its policy is favourable towards the US - *"The military in Russia and NATO face many common tasks which should be tackled for the sake of the world"* (The Guardian, 23.3.93).

One of these 'common tasks' has been to help the US in its struggle against German imperialism in Yugoslavia. Russian support (arms, food etc) for the Serbs, was of great use to the US in 1991 and 92 when it supported the Serb's war against the German backed Croats. This war saw the levelling of Vukovar by the Serbs in Autumn 1991. There was no out cry then by the US. However, due to the power struggle in Russia, where the conservatives supported the Serbs, America has not been able to put too much pressure on Yeltsin to turn off this support, for fear of strengthening the conservatives. This, along with the counter moves by the Germans and French, has blocked the US's efforts to impose its political and military domination in this area, thus frustrating its aim to block and even push back German imperialism's offensive in the Balkans. It now looks as if this blockage of US strategy is beginning to loosen. At the Vancouver Summit in April the US and Yeltsin came to a secret agreement that, in exchange for more aid, Yeltsin would put pressure on Serbia. With this aid and the open backing of the US, Yeltsin and crew have been able to gain the upper hand against the conservatives, which will be put to the test in the referendum on 25 April. Undoubtedly they are also starting to put the squeeze on the Serb bourgeoisie as well.

The future only holds more chaos
 So our leaders' concern to shore up Yeltsin holds out no prospect of a better world, but even more imperialist conflict. US imperialism has made clear its determination to build its alliance with Russia, while its main rivals have had to help finance this. All of this will only heighten their determination to use every opportunity to try and strengthen their position against Russia and the US. Germany through pushing the Croats even harder to make new gains and building up its influence in the Ukraine etc, Japan will strengthen its alliance with China and work for an alliance with Germany, thus notching up the tensions even more. And all the while the workers in Russia will see their living conditions deteriorate even more. Some helping hand!!!

TH 24.4.93

North Korea: US's new whipping boy

In the last few months North Korea has been at the centre of disputes over its development of nuclear weapons and its declaration of a state of 'semi-war' in response to joint US and South Korean military manoeuvres. It has been labelled the 'new Iraq'. However, the fact that these disputes are arising now is neither an accident, nor the work of a muck, but a consequence of the new imperialist rivalries that have developed in the wake of the collapse of the two blocs led by US and Russian imperialism. In particular, they are part of the USA's effort to resist any weakening of its power around the globe.

North and South Korea have been an arena for confrontation between rival imperialist powers since they emerged after the Second World War under the auspices of the USSR and the US respectively. The Korean War of 1950-53 was a key moment in the struggle between the two blocs, sacrificing the lives of up to three million workers and poor peasants.

Imperialist reshuffles in the Far East
 In the wake of the collapse of the two imperialist blocs every nation has been driven to assert its own interests. This has led to new alignments and to new confrontations around the globe.

In the Far East, Japan and China, two nations who were previously members of the American bloc, are today struggling to assert themselves as regional powers with their own imperialist interests. This trajectory inevitably turns them against the US and will tend to draw them towards the Franco-German regroupment.

Moreover, the support given by the US to Russia can only aggravate this situation since both countries have territorial disputes with Russia. All of this gives them a degree of common interest, which was highlighted by the recent visit of the Japanese Emperor to China. This visit is all the more remarkable considering that these two countries have been enemies since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Traditionally, China and Japan have fought each other for the control of this part of the Far East; these rivalries still exist and could be important obstacles in the path of a full alliance between the two countries. But for the moment they both have a common interest in resisting the USA's attempts to assert its authority and control in this part of the globe.

Korea: a stake in the imperialist game
 It is in this context that Korea has assumed a new importance. On the one hand China seeks to

remain on close terms with North Korea, not least because of its military significance, and on the other it has sought to develop relations with South Korea, principally by giving it official recognition. The purpose of this is to reduce American influence in the area, which is essential if China is to become a dominant regional power. This has led to some tensions with North Korea, including attacks on Chinese fishing boats and the blocking of an assassination attempt on the president of South Korea.

For the US, South Korea is an important strategic base allowing it to exert influence throughout the Far East.

Today, it has additional importance in that it stands between Japan and China. The US currently has 35,000 to 38,000 troops there and has including fighter aircraft.

Last year the US suspended its annual military exercise in South Korea. This year, the manoeuvres were resumed with reinforcements bringing the US presence to 55,000. At the same time the International Atomic Energy Agency demanded from North Korea access to suspected nuclear weapon installations under threat of UN sanctions, and even of military strikes against these installations. These disputes are first and foremost a pretext for the US to assert its power

in the region. North Korea is playing for the USA a similar role to that played by Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Presenting the Stalinist regime of North Korea as a maverick state that refuses to abide by international law and poses a threat to world peace provides the USA with a very good excuse for throwing its weight around and issuing exactly-welsh warnings to its rivals.

A second aspect of the USA's tactics is that they are an attempt to force China into a position where it has to choose between North or South Korea. The US hopes that with this plan it could thus frustrate China's overall aims and possibly insert a wedge between it and Japan, since the latter is strongly opposed to North Korea having nuclear arms.

North Korea initially responded by withdrawing from the IAEA and declaring a state of 'semi-war', closing its border and imposing a curfew. China took a much more cautious line calling for the dispute to be settled through diplomatic means and pushing North Korea to agree to 'temporary inspections'. But it's not really in the USA's interests to settle this dispute. It needs whipping boys like North Korea because it is more and more compelled to defend its global position through asserting its military strength. Pavel

10th Congress of the International Communist Current

The revolutionary organisation and the recovery of the class struggle

The ICC recently held its 10th international congress. The international congress is its most important organisational moment. It expresses its collective life, the unity of its principles, and its political homogenisation on an international scale. The congress has a particular importance which requires several months preparation by all its militants. The organisation makes a balance sheet of its activity over the past two years, and examines the validity of its analyses of the international situation, in particular on the class struggle, and traces perspectives for the period to come. However, the ICC is not self-sufficient: it is in the avant-garde of the whole working class. It therefore gives an account of the work of its international congress to the whole class.

Content analysis of the acceleration of history

The 9th international congress, in 1991, confirmed the validity of the ICC's analytical framework of the entry of decadent capitalism into its phase of decomposition. The latter summarised the historic stakes posed by the collapse of the eastern bloc, the disintegration of the USSR, the disappearance of the western bloc, the growing chaos of the world situation, and the Gulf War, which was the first imperialist conflict of this new period. This congress took account of the reflux of class consciousness at that time. This was expressed in a temporary loss of a historic perspective, and accompanied by a break in combativity caused by current events as well as by the campaign on the 'death of communism'. The congress also issued an appeal to the serious groups of the proletarian political milieu to stimulate a discussion within it, and underlined the significance of the emergence of small minorities of the working class looking for clarification and revolutionary militant activity. These minorities were the sign that, despite the temporary reflux, the proletariat had not suffered the sort of defeat which would threaten the present historic course toward decisive class confrontations.

In these conditions the 9th congress had to maintain the coherence and general vision of the ICC on the international situation, to prevent the organisation from getting left behind by the acceleration of history, and to explain the causes of the events that the working class was living through. It had to try and limit the effects of the reflux of the consciousness and militancy, and to show the class the validity of the revolutionary perspective. This congress made the tasks of theoretical deepening, of propagation and discussion with people looking for clarification, a priority so that the work of the organisation could have the most solid basis.

Since 1991, the historical situation has continued to accelerate. The 10th Congress of the ICC drew a positive balance-sheet of the organisation's capacity to follow the international situation closely and foresee the main lines of its evolution. The dizzying rush of events can lead the superficial observer into schematism or speculation. The congress, however, was able to reaffirm, in the course of its work, the dialectical method of marxism. Only this method can understand both the globality and the details of present events.

Capitalism sinks further into recession, wars, and chaos

The implacable development of the decomposition of capitalism has left its mark on all aspects of the world situation. Imperialist tensions between all countries are increasing, giving rise to new wars in all corners of the world, while old conflicts remain unresolved. The sharpening conflict between the great powers is leading, albeit with considerable obstacles, to the further formation of two new antagonistic imperialist blocs (around the only viable candidates - Germany and the United States). On every continent this increasingly world conflict is influencing all the regional conflicts. The political scandals within the dominant class of the most stable countries and the coups d'état and ethnic or

religious conflicts in the weakest countries reveal the chaos that has penetrated every aspect of the life of the bourgeoisie. The economic crisis has reached a level never seen before, hitting even the most powerful countries with full force, and revealing the absurdity of this mode of production. It is absurd because millions of human beings are threatened with starvation in the third world and hundreds of millions of workers are thrown into the street and condemned to poverty in the most developed countries solely because there is overproduction of goods which, due to the blind laws of capitalist profit, cannot find buyers. All these aspects: economic crisis, imperialist conflicts and chaos aggregate each other in an unending barbaric spiral.

For example, the chaos of the war in ex-Yugoslavia is not isolated from the world situation, but a microcosm of all the worsening contradictions of capitalism in decomposition. If we can, of course, find the origin of this war in the conflicts between the different cliques of the local bourgeoisie, the ethnic conflicts sharpened by decomposition have very quickly become a terrain for the rivalries and alliances of the great powers.

A turning point in the reflux of the working class. However, the aspect of the international situation which the 10th Congress has underlined the most is that the struggles of the international proletariat are returning to the front of the historical stage, providing a counter-tendency to the growing barbarism of capitalism, and openly revealing the validity of its historic course toward decisive class confrontations which can open up a new revolutionary wave of the world proletariat.

The 10th congress ratified and deepened the analysis of the ICC on the turning point in the class struggle. The proletariat is pulling itself out of a situation of profound retreat in its consciousness, of the momentary loss of any perspective for a better society among the majority of the working class; it is also emerging from a retreat in its militancy, the result of a feeling of powerlessness faced with the events of the world. The proletariat is beginning the recovery of its militancy, of its class struggles, faced with the fact that capitalism, far from entering a "new world order", leads to a situation where the conditions of life for the working class are going to worsen more and more, both because of the incessant aggravation of the crisis and of the multiplication of the threat of war. Thus, during the last months, we have seen, following the massive and very combative struggles of the proletariat in Italy in Autumn '92, demonstrations of workers in Britain against the pit closures, expressions of combativity in the proletariat in Germany against massive redundancies as well as struggles in other European countries and other continents.

However, the present rise in workers' struggles does not mean that the proletariat has recovered, or will rapidly recover, a long term, revolutionary perspective. The working class will have to travel a difficult road to spread its class consciousness. The period of struggles which is opening up today will be crucial in allowing the working class to be preoccupied with and to appropriate the experiences of the last twenty years of its struggle against the bourgeoisie and its instruments of domination, including all forms of racism. This period will be vital for permitting it to regain confidence in its own strength, to renew the search for solidarity and to extend and unify it.

The Congress did not underestimate the difficulties that the working class will have in finding its way again. The explosion of massive anti-militant struggles in Italy marked the end of the period of retreat in combativity in the working class on an international scale. However, the workers in Italy are one of the most experienced sectors of the world proletariat and the least disorientated by the collapse of Stalinism. It will, then, be some time before struggles as

extensive as those in Italy are produced in other countries. What we are participating in is a rise in struggles, certainly in several countries and particularly at the heart of capitalism, in Western Europe; but it is a question of dispersed struggles, characterised by great difficulty in detaching themselves from union control and even, for the most part, in breaking with isolation and attempting to extend to other sectors.

The congress of the ICC clearly affirmed that the bourgeoisie is sharpening all its weapons against the proletariat, whether the unions, especially "rank and file" or "radical" unions, or the left wing parties. The congress also brought to light that the bourgeoisie attempts equally to use the effects of the decomposition of its own system to lead the proletariat away from its own terrain of the struggle and lure it into dead ends, for example by presenting it with the false alternative of "defending democratic institutions" or allowing the free rein to the growth of fascism, racism and xenophobia".

The congress also drew attention to the difficulties which workers face at the present time in launching strikes, given the threat of redundancies which weighs on their minds all the time, and the inability of strikes factory by factory to defend their living and working conditions. In this sense it is probable that street demonstrations will become the place for workers to meet and to struggle, to unify the demands and the objectives, to identify and evaluate their strength, and to prepare and to develop the struggle, and that such demonstrations will have a greater importance than strikes (which doesn't mean to say that the latter won't also have an importance). On the other hand the congress has not lost sight of the possibility, with the new waves of massive redundancies, for the unemployed to occupy a place in the struggle. Again, street demonstrations could be a place for solidarity, for the workers who are employed to meet and unify with those who have been laid off.

The ICC faces up to its responsibilities. Thus, in continuity with the 9th congress, the 10th international congress of the ICC had to confirm the validity of the organisation's framework of analysis, and to bring it up to date, faced with the change in the situation of the working class, the increase in its militancy and the rise of its struggles: to prepare the organisation for a determined intervention in the next class struggles. While recognition that these struggles won't necessarily have a massive character at the beginning, that they will perhaps not show much possibility of extension, the ICC must be present to animate them, to bring out their potential, and at the same time to denounce the manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie and to put the workers on their guard against the useless waste of energy that long isolated struggles can cause in their ranks. While being aware that the weight of the retreat in consciousness still persists in the majority of the proletariat, the ICC must, in each struggle, put forward the common interests of the working class, both immediate and historic, beyond the interests of this or that group of workers, of this or that factory or sector.

With the preoccupation that history is accelerating more and more and that we are entering a new period of proletarian struggles, the international congress reaffirmed the necessity to strengthen the international centralisation of the ICC, which constitutes the axis of all its activity and determines the accomplishment of all its tasks. To give an idea of what this international functioning represents, it is enough to see how the capacity of the organisation to talk with a single voice in a dozen countries can be an added strength for the working class to the extent that the experiences of the struggles in certain countries can have repercussions in the working class of other countries, which is all the more important because the bourgeoisie organises an international black out of the most significant struggles of the proletariat (as was the case with the

struggles in Italy), and because it always presents defeats as "victories" (as when they are caught in the union traps).

The congress emphasised the necessity to reinforce the ICC's main tools of intervention: the territorial publications and the International Review. Concerning the first it is a question of both deepening our positions and improving the readability of our press, of making marxism express itself in a living way. Concerning the International Review, the congress underlined its quality, a real expression of the capacity of the ICC to fulfill its role as a pole of theoretical and political clarification.

The 10th congress also put forward the need for the ICC to conduct a more determined intervention towards the other groups in the proletarian political milieu. The congress also drew attention to the negative evolution of the parasitic groups whose destructive attitude towards this milieu places them outside it.

The 10th international congress of the ICC was extremely positive for our organisation, and we are convinced that it was equally positive for the working class as a whole. The ICC left the congress better armed to fulfill its responsibilities in the period to come, to conduct a determined intervention in the struggles and to give the working class a clear and coherent revolutionary political orientation. This congress was a manifestation of the internationalism, militant, unitary, solid, and critical spirit which permanently animates the ICC as an international revolutionary organisation. In a certain way, it can be considered by the working class as a mirror in which it can see its own potential reflected. It is this potential to develop its struggles and unify them on the international level which makes the world working class the only force capable of putting an end to capitalist barbarism and saving humanity.

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Balkans war shows the irrationality of decadent capitalism

The assertion that the war in the Balkans is irrational will not surprise many readers. The press and television have shown us the 'insanity', 'evil', and the asynchronism of the present conflicts. From the marxist point of view, however, the term 'irrational' has quite a different meaning to the one given it by the media pundits and their paymasters. The war, according to the latter, doesn't conform to eternal moral values like peace, justice and democracy. For marxists, rejecting the hypocrisy of 'humanitarianism', the war expresses the irrationality of an economic system in decline and decomposition. It is this system as a whole that has become a dead-end for humanity, and needs to be thrown by the international struggle of the working class.

Some revolutionary organisations that defend this internationalist perspective, while aspiring to a marxist analysis of events, believe that the involvement of the great powers in the Balkans has rational economic motives:

- All the leading European countries as well as the United States have had significant roles to play. British, German, Italian, American bosses have sold arms to the various Yugoslav republics and have supported them either openly or secretly for two basic reasons:

- so that they can make profits from arms and munitions sales;

- to keep up links with the republics which might provide them with markets for their own goods and investment opportunities. In other words, they are being used as pawns in the international game of inter-imperialist rivalries that is underway." Statement distributed by the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

(which includes the British group the Communist Workers Organisation) and the Gruppe Internationalistische Kommunisten of Austria. Published in Internationalist Communist Review no. 11, 1993).

For these groups, the manoeuvres of the great powers around Yugoslavia flow basically from commercial interests: these powers have supposedly made a rational economic appraisal and consequently expect a return on their 'investment' in the Balkans.

It is true that the Western imperialist powers do not neglect their commercial interests and rivalries for one minute. It is quite wrong, however, to cite these interests and rivalries as the 'basic' reason for the imperialist intervention of the great powers in Yugoslavia and elsewhere. Such an explanation, first, simply doesn't conform to reality. Yugoslavia, like the rest of Eastern Europe, was bankrupt even before the present destruction and dismemberment of the country further added to its insolvency. From 1986-91 Yugoslavia had an average annual inflation rate of over 300%. In the last decade the economy declined 2% on average per year. Any markets and investment opportunities, after the devastation of the conflict, will be extremely limited, and couldn't possibly match the enormous cost to the great powers of being a military 'player' in the present situation.

Nor is the present conflict a significant outlet for arms sales. On the contrary, the United States armed forces, and the United Nations forces under their domination, are looking to establish their own military presence. Furthermore the US has continued to insist that the Bosnian Muslims, whose cause it is temporarily defending, remain subject to an arms sales embargo. The basic reason for the participation of the main capitalist powers in this conflict is not for the prospect of economic gain. On the contrary, in this conflict, and others today, the explanation lies in the logic of imperialist war in capitalism's decadence, a logic which flows from the economic impasse of the system and further contributes to the bankruptcy of the latter (1).

Marxism explains reality with the method of historical materialism. This means searching for the ultimate causes of unfolding events, such as

Wars, in the dynamics of the relations of production and their different historic phases. Historical materialism is not accountancy. In the decadent phase of capitalism wars did often give a powerful push to economic development, and were therefore frequently 'advantageous' to the rival capitalist nations, which engaged in them. These wars tended to be restricted to the immediate combatants, involved a limited amount of the warring nations' resources, which tended to be more than compensated by subsequent enrichment(2). The onset of capitalist decadence changed the nature of the armed competition that took place between capitalist powers. New outlets for the development of capitalist production decreased in relative terms. War became a means to fight over the existing spoils. As a result, war became a whirlpool which drew all the main capitalist powers into its vortex.

War this century has squandered human life in tens of millions, both in the civilian and military sectors. It lays waste vast quantities of accumulated labour: buildings, transportation, factories. It leads to the ruin of the entire economic system. Economic activity is increasingly restricted to the pursuit of war. The inherent laws of capitalist production have come up against their historic limits - tending to destroy the productive forces rather than develop them. The move into capitalism sinks into the crises of its decadent phase, the more the logic of militarism imposes itself, even though militarism itself is no more capable than other policies of providing a solution to the economic contradictions of the system.

In the Balkans today the manoeuvres of the great powers, as well as the war between the local gangs, flow from imperialist objectives which have no economic rationality. The context of generalised imperialist rivalry forces each state to participate in the deadly game. The United States is trying, with its British ally, to re-assert its world hegemony, particularly in Europe. At the same time its erstwhile ally, Germany, is seeking to carve out a sphere of influence with a view to creating an imperialist bloc of its own. The inevitable result of these strategies both in ex-Yugoslavia and elsewhere in the future is more destruction, both through military action and through the crippling cost of this action on the already bankrupt economies of the imperialist powers, large and small.

In the present period another factor further accentuates the irrationality of imperialist war. The decomposition of capitalism has created a counter-tendency to the formation of new imperialist blocs: the struggle of 'each against all', particularly on the periphery of world capitalism, which contains the possibility that war will spiral out of control.

When revolutionaries argue that the dynamic of capitalist war can be explained by the search for arms sales, or for market opportunities in devastated areas, they give marxism a bad name. They minimise the seriousness of the world situation facing the working class, mask the decadence and decomposition of capitalism and obscure the urgency of the historic alternative: socialism or barbarism.

War is one of the most decisive questions that the working class has to face, not only because it is the main victim of war, as common folklore and as a labour force subjected to unprecedented levels of exploitation, but also because war is one of the essential factors in the development of a consciousness of the bankruptcy of capitalism, of the barbarism towards which it is leading the human race. **FS**

1) The IBRP also reduced the explanation for the Gulf War to one of capitalist interest - a war for oil. Blindness to the global states of imperialist conflict in this period is not new. For

a more detailed analysis of the incomprehension of this question in the proletarian political milieu see International Review No 72.

2) An unprecedented period of prosperity for both victor and vanquished followed the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. See International Review 52 and 53 for a discussion of the different role war plays according to the rise or decline of the capitalist system.

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Clinton unveils his austerity package

The inauguration of a new Democratic administration, headed by Bill Clinton, rather than being to the advantage of the American working class, as all the liberal and leftist media claptrap would have us believe, has already resulted in a renewed attack on the living and working conditions of workers in the United States.

By talking the language of the 'New Deal' of the 1930s, the new administration hopes to hoodwink workers into thinking that the new regime is a 'caring' alternative to the days of Bush and Reagan.

Clinton's austerity programme personifies the ideological switch to a little more state intervention. In contrast to Reagan and Bush, there is no mention of relying on 'market forces' to assure growth and prosperity. Clinton's administration understands that there is an imperative need to attack the working class, but not head on. This is done particularly through the state, through cuts in social programmes and tax increases.

The man from 'Hope' prepares new attacks on the working class

Since the November election, the capitalist media has been gushing with optimism for the future. Bill Clinton's election, we are told, offers 'hope' for change. Of course the only 'hope' that a Clinton presidency personifies is the hope of the ruling class that it can put one over on the working class - and buy some time in delaying the outbreak of workers' defensive actions against lay-offs and wage cuts. The aim of this ideological campaign is to deceive workers into thinking that things will change for the better, and that there will be no need for struggle.

Despite the 'new look' presidency at the White House, with its 'New Deal' rhetoric the Clinton administration is about to launch a new round of attacks against the working class.

No change for US imperialism Clinton is committed to imperialist military intervention overseas. Indeed this was one of the main reasons that the American bourgeoisie wanted to change the governmental team. The Clinton faction is committed to a US military intervention in Bosnia. His presidential election campaign put forward the use of military airstrikes in Bosnia and this means a continued policy of sacrificing the lives of working class men and women for the sake of American capitalism.

Clinton's first act in respect of the economy was to suspend budget cuts which were triggered by the Gramm-Rudman Act's budget deficit ride-a-lis. Clinton's explanation for this was that this was no time to slash the Pentagon's budget with US troops deployed in Somalia and the Persian Gulf.

The Clinton plan proposes to cut military spending by only \$8 billion, demonstrating his commitment to imperialist military spending overseas. These \$8 billion cuts simply reflect the

decision to switch from a global nuclear war strategy to one relying on smaller, mobile rapid deployment forces, necessitated by the changed historic situation.

No change for the working class Despite months of campaign promises about tax relief for the working class, Clinton's economic team has made it abundantly clear that there will be no tax break for working people. Quite the contrary. Plans are underway to raise wages, in particular on the price of petrol. This is tragic as this was used against Perot's election promise to raise the tax on petrol by 50 cents. Plans are also underway to create a national sales and consumption tax.

Despite campaign 'promises' to raise taxes only on the rich (defined during the campaign as those earning \$200,000 or more per year) the Clinton plan will hit all families earning \$30,000 or more. Before Reagan, social security income to the elderly was exempt from taxation. Reagan subjected 50% of social security income to taxation for retired people who had a combined family income of more than \$32,000 or individuals with total incomes or pensions of \$25,000. Clinton has now raised this percentage to 85%.

Although this will result in a huge income tax increase for the federal state, the Clinton administration classifies this as a 'spending-cut' not a tax increase, and therefore enables them to claim that their plan is not the greatest tax increase in US history.

Clinton damages your health Clinton's health care reform plan, which was a centre-piece of his campaign, is actually an attack upon the quality of medical care of American workers and their families. Clinton proposes to bring the 37 million people who are not covered by any form of medical insurance into a national system of what he calls 'managed competition', while at the same time NOT increasing the total amount of GDP spent on medical care in America. Since it goes without saying that the rich will still have access to any kind of medical care that they need, this so-called 'reform' can only be accomplished by watering down the quality of medical care for workers.

The economic recession in the US (already incredibly deep) will lead to greater lay-offs and job-losses, affecting whole communities. Clinton's economic package cannot even begin

to 'fight crime'. Clinton proposes to add 100,000 Police Officers across the US to be recruited from the ranks of laid-off military personnel. Beefing up the repressive apparatus of the state is NEVER in the interests of the working class. This plan simply reflects the ruling class's decision to repress its repressive forces. This force will not only be used against 'crime' but against workers' struggles as well.

The American ruling class has begun a relentless campaign to lay the groundwork for an attack on social programmes (what is called the social wage) including social security, which up to now, and even under the Reagan and Bush administrations, was always considered to be untouchable. For political reasons the politicians and media don't talk directly about cutting social programmes, but instead rant about getting 'entitlements' under control. As one television journalist put it 'Fully half of America's \$1.5 trillion budget is made of entitlements, mostly Social Security and Health care programmes'. This is of course a lie, as this is paid for by the workers anyway through their exploitation and taxes, and the fact that the full amount of entitlement is not taken up anyway is conveniently ignored here. However, this gives an indication of the campaign which is being launched by the Clinton administration.

While the media is trying to lull the working class into passivity with all the talk of 'hope', under Clinton the facts that things in the US are going to get worse.

The economy is not recovering in spite of all the promises made by Clinton. The government is planning more attacks. The Clinton honeymoon is already over - much shorter than the ruling class would have liked. Workers are already being forced to defend themselves. *JG*

has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees to delegatise elections and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

* Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social animosity with a historic force and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it is not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terror is always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action on an international scale, in order to contribute to a process which leads to the revolutionary action of the violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.

* The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

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Political positions of the ICC

World Revolution is the section in Britain of the International Communist Current which defends the following political positions:

- Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in international revolutionary war which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years afterwards. The failure of this revolutionary war, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.

- The Stalinist regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called 'socialist' or 'communist' were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in the international arena. These wars bring nothing to

humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only defend itself to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

All the national ideologies - 'national independence', 'the right of nations to self-determination' etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another nation, the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of the bourgeoisie.

In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections must act as a veil for the proletariat.

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|--|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| INSIDE: British imperialism against 'peace talks' p2 | Unions phoney opposition to austerity p2 | Labour's attack on workers p3 | Worsening economic crisis p4 |
| Critique against clarification p4 | Trotskyists fuel pacifist illusions p5 | Polemic with PCI on union question p6 | Communist Manifesto of 1848 p8 |

World economic crisis, military tensions in the Gulf Capitalism proves its bankruptcy

Ever since the collapse of the eastern bloc in 1989, the bourgeoisie has been assaulting our ears with its message about the 'failure of communism'. Last year, the 80th anniversary of the October revolution, it intensified this campaign by publishing a series of books about the 'crimes' of communism, using the old trick of mixing up the gigantic revolutionary experience of 1917 with the Stalinist counter-revolution that was its gravedigger.

But what the events of late 97 and early 98 show above all is that the real failure, the real bankruptcy, is that of capitalism, not communism.

The financial convulsions in south east Asia are a spectacular expression of the gravity of the world economic crisis. One after another, the so-called dragon and tiger economies collapsed under a vast heap of debt, and the consequences of this collapse are still hanging ominously over the main industrial countries - who are also being kept alive by the deadly medicine of credit, decadent capitalism's 'answer' to its chronic lack of markets. Already, the workers of south east Asia are being asked to pay the cost of this crisis, through millions of redundancies and mass expulsions of 'im-

migrant' workers. And it won't be long before this latest plunge in the world economy results in massive attacks on the working class in the industrial centres, who have already endured years of deteriorating living standards.

At the same time, the war preparations of the great imperialist powers are intensifying. Instead of seeing the new era of peace and prosperity promised after the fall of the eastern bloc, we have seen that peace is impossible under capitalism. Capitalism has become a system of permanent war, and today military barbarism is being unleashed all over the planet, from the massacre of the population in Algeria to the massive armada now patrolling the Gulf.

Behind the war build-up against the 'butcher of Baghdad' lies the merciless confrontation between the great imperialist gangsters for control of strategic zones all over the world. The more capitalism stinks into crisis, the more the rivalries between the great powers shift directly onto the military terrain, threatening more and more areas of the planet with war and chaos. And as always, it's the exploited class which is the prime victim of this, not only because it's the workers who will have to

sweat harder to pay for the military expenses of the ruling class, but also because, in the final analysis, they are the ones who will be asked to make the 'ultimate sacrifice' as cannon-fodder in capitalism's wars.

All this reveals the true face of capitalism. It should sweep away the workers' false hopes and illusions, which are so carefully maintained by the bourgeoisie. Capitalism has nothing to offer us but misery and massacres. But while the flight towards war is the only 'solution' to the impasse of its economic system that the bourgeoisie can come up with, the proletariat has a very different solution to offer. The struggle of the proletariat for the defence of its basic class interests is the only force in society that can block the slide towards war; and it is also the only soil in which the perspective of a new society, a society free of exploitation and war, can itself become a material force.

This was precisely the historic significance of the events of 1917 in Russia and 1918 in Germany. In those heroic days, the working class showed not only that it could paralyse the imperialist war machine, forcing the bourgeoisie to end four years of slaughter; by

taking political power in Russia, and raising the banner of communist revolution all over the world, it showed that the proletariat had a positive alternative to the barbarism of bourgeois society in decay.

The bourgeoisie crushed those revolutionary attempts, and mankind has been paying the price ever since. The crimes of the twentieth century have not been the crimes of communism, but of capitalism: the Gulag, Belen, Dresden, Hiroshima, Vietnam, Iraq, Bosnia, Rwanda - the whole infernal spiral of crisis and war has been the result of the defeat of the great revolutionary wave of the international working class. But despite all the campaigns about the end of communism, the end of the class struggle, the end of the working class itself, the working class not only still exists but it still fights, and still contains within itself the perspective of communism. Not the nightmare inversion that bore its name under Stalinism, but the authentic communism of Marx, Luxemburg and Lenin, of all the revolutionary organisations that have continued their combat for a community that unites the whole of mankind in freely associated labour.

Imperialist conflict behind the Gulf crisis

With the signing of the agreement between Saddam and UN General Secretary Kofi Annan, the immediate threat of military action against Iraq has been averted. But does this make the world a safer place, a place where rational peace negotiations can make warfare obsolete? Such illusions are being peddled by the media, but they vanish into the mist the minute you analyse the real reasons for the huge military build up in the Gulf.

For this confrontation was not really about Saddam, not really about his stockpile of deadly weapons. Still less was it about windy phrases like 'respect for international law'. Saddam, after all, was the creation of the very powers who now vilify him as an evil tyrant. The US and Britain in particular armed him, supported his war against Iran, turned a blind eye to his gas attacks on the Kurds, even supplied him with what he needed to fabricate his chemical and biological weaponry. In 1991, despite proving their ability to sweep on towards Baghdad, the 'Allies' carefully refrained from deporting him and left him with just the military forces he needed to keep internal order against the uprisings which they themselves had called for with such ruthless cynicism. Besides which Saddam is very far from being the only 'evil tyrant' in the world, and compared to the weapons of mass destruc-

tion at the disposal of some states, Saddam's own arsenal is feeble indeed.

The crisis of US 'world leadership'

The USA dispatched its armada to the Gulf in 1998 for essentially the same reason it unleashed Operation Desert Storm in 1991: as a massive demonstration of force aimed less at third rate mavericks like Saddam than at the USA's most serious imperialist rivals - countries like France, Germany, Russia and Japan. Following the collapse of the eastern bloc in 1991, there was no common enemy to hold the western bloc together, and the USA's former allies had far less reason to bow to its authority. The Gulf war of 91 essentially expressed America's attempt to forcefully prevent its former allies becoming its principal rivals.

It formed for a brief period. In 1991, all the major western powers, as well as the different regimes in the Middle East, rallied to the anti-Saddam coalition. But since then, the law of 'every man for himself' has more and more gained the upper hand and the situation has shifted dramatically.

The most spectacular expression of the USA's crisis of authority has been the break-down of its historic alliance with Britain, on the latter's initiative, from its only 'evil tyrant' in the world, and compared to the weapons of mass destruc-

tion to defend their imperialist interests in Yugoslavia, supporting the Serbian camp against both Croatia (backed by Germany) and Bosnia (backed by the US) and doing all in their power to prevent the Americans from intervening directly into the situation. Britain's conflict with the US over Ireland is another expression of the demise of the 'Special Relationship' between Britain and the US.

There are plenty of other examples of this challenge to what the US calls its 'world leadership'. In Israel, the Netanyahu government came to power against the wishes of the US, and promptly sabotaged the Middle East peace process which had been such a triumph for American diplomacy. This has resulted in a marked loss of US authority in this and other strategic region. France profited from this by reasserting its influence in a region from which it had been almost totally excluded after the Gulf war. And America's attempt to re-impose its authority in 1996 - with the cruise missile attack on Iraq - provoked massive reactions from nearly all the local powers who had supported it so firmly in 1991, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

But these reverses for the USA did not for a moment mean that it would simply resign itself to the decline in its global position. From 1995 onwards, the USA has been engaged in a fierce

counter-offensive, marked by its return in force to ex-Yugoslavia, when it bombed the Serbs into signing the Dayton agreement. It has also inflicted a series of defeats on France in the latter's traditional hunting ground, Africa: this was the real meaning and result of the wars in Rwanda and Zaire. And France's commitment also served as a warning to other possible challengers. The message was certainly heeded by Britain which subsequently distanced itself from the 'Entente' with France.

But the underlying problem did not go away. America's rivals have retreated here and there, adopted a low profile when necessary, but only to take advantage of every new opportunity to further their ambitions. The US is still faced with the task of proving that it remains the boss of all the bosses, to use the Mafia's term.

Continued on page 5

2 BRITISH SITUATION

British imperialism manoeuvres against the Northern Ireland 'peace talks'

At the time of writing the future of the multi-party talks on Northern Ireland would appear to be in the balance. Following the RUC's declaration that the murders of a drug dealer and a member of the UDA were the work of the IRA, Sinn Féin was barred from the talks until March 9th. The subsequent bombings in Moira and Portadown were attributed to the IRA by David Trimble, leader of the main Unionist Party, to the Continuity IRA by informed speculation, and to anyone, except the IRA, by the Sinn Féin leadership.

Whichever paramilitary group (or the security forces that Sinn Féin have sometimes implied might be responsible) is behind the car bombs the situation is being portrayed as very grave, with the 'peace talks' in a precarious position. Billy Hutchinson, a leader of the Progressive Unionist Party, which is linked to the UVF has said that "Political dialogue is not working. Time is running out for the loyalist ceasefire." (Guardian 24/2/98) Meanwhile Trimble is emphatic that "there can be no question of Sinn Féin re-entering the talks process after this" (ibid) with the clear threat that if Sinn Féin got the meeting that it's been asking for with Tony Blair there would be a Unionist walkout from the talks.

On the other hand, Sinn Féin are giving no indication that they will be rushing back to the talks. As Mitchell McLaughlin put it "we will go back in when there is a viable negotiating process and we will go back on our own terms." (ibid). In addition to this Gerry Adams, while denying that the IRA had any connection with the bombs, and insisting that the ceasefire was still in place, said that "Sinn Féin has no more control over this current situation than any other political party" (Irish News 24/2/98). Of all the comments volunteered by the crowds of politicians, this is one which points

to a way of understanding what's going on in Northern Ireland without getting lost in the details of events - because the key to what's going on in Northern Ireland lies in the antagonisms between imperialist powers.

Free-for-all after 1989

To repeat the main point made by our article in WR 211 "it is necessary to appreciate that in the period since 1989, since the end of a world divided into two great imperialist blocs, dominated by the US and the USSR, the world situation has been marked by an international free-for-all, where each imperialist power pursues its own interests away from the discipline of a bloc leader. In the case of Britain,

it has been taking a line that is increasingly independent of US interests, while the US tries to influence and put pressure on British imperialists. And one of the most important weapons that it has at its command is its influence over certain political factions in Ireland, North and South. While the links of US imperialism with Fianna Fail are long established, more recently it has been animating the actions of Sinn Féin and the IRA."

As for the 'peace talks' they "were imposed by US imperialism on the British state. British imperialism is profoundly adaptive but the 'peace process' can only go in the direction of the loss of British control of Northern Ireland. Labour are as aware of the strategic importance of Northern Ireland as their Tory predecessors which they underlined last summer with the reinforcement of British troops, the continued support for the marching season and Blair's basic guarantees to unionism. The 'peace talks' can only lead to concession that are not in the interests of British imperialism."

With this framework it is easier to see why Sinn Féin were so exasperated at their expulsion

from the talks. Martin McGuinness identified the Republicans' enemies - "we are seeing a lynch mob of Ulster Unionists led by the British government" (Guardian 17/2/98) - while Gerry Adams said "I am absolutely pissed off. We tried to make this thing work and those who have no interest in making it work set on two men being killed to split it and bring this process down." (ibid). Apart from showing the Labour government's commitment to 'democratic debate' and 'consultation' there is nothing in the 'peace talks' for British imperialism. This is why whatever proposals or institutions might emerge from the talks process will be subject to the Unionist veto in Northern Ireland. His commitment to the peace process and his skill in moving it forward are obvious" (Irish News 6/2/98).

While seemingly generous in its analysis, it does not take much reading between the lines to see what Kennedy is getting at. It is a reminder that while seeing "eye-to-eye" is the situation today, this could easily revert to the conflicts of the past. And while Blair is commended for his "skill" in "moving... forward" the peace process, it is a warning that any obstructive behaviour would not be welcome. This was further underlined by Congressman Peter King who said that Blair "understands all the nuances and how important it is to reach an accommodation" (ibid). Blair doesn't actually need to understand any "nuances", as there is no meaningful 'accommodation' or concession that can be made by British imperialism that doesn't threaten its strategic interests. US imperialism will continue to exploit this reality whenever it wants to deter British imperialism from its independent imperialist orientation. *Travesty 25/2/98*

Twists and turns of Anglo-US relations
While the US has been using Ireland as a means of showing its opposition to the British

Unions' phoney opposition to Labour's austerity

In recent weeks the government and the trades unions have engaged in a conflict which has "proved one of the fiercest fought since the election" (FT 18/2/98). At issue is the question of union recognition and, more specifically, what form the ballot on recognition should take. On the one side stand the unions and a large part of the Labour Party, arguing that it should be decided by 50% of those voting. On the other stand the CBI and the government, arguing it should be 50% of the total workforce.

John Monks, the leader of the TUC, has declared it to be "a decisive moment". In reality it is a trap set for the working class, whose real significance lies in what it tells us about the evolution of the bourgeoisie's strategy and the balance of class forces.

Labour and the unions

The election of the Labour government in May last year did not contradict the tendency, seen in many countries, for the unions to distance themselves from government in order to better play their role of phoney opposition. It did, however, require the ruling class to do something about the formal traditional links between Labour and unions.

In the period before the election a central theme of the 'modernisation' of the Labour Party was the erosion of these links, culminating in the leaked suggestion that they might be severed altogether. During the election the unions played a double game. On the one hand supporting a Labour victory while, on the other, conjuring up a number of strikes to show that they were prepared to stand up to Labour. Since then, the unions have proclaimed a number of victories, such as that of the British Airways workers in July (see WR 206 & 207), while Labour has maintained its 'independent' stance, allowing unions back into OCHQ on the one hand but refusing to intervene in the BA strike or to repeal the

Tories' 'anti-union' legislation on the other. In this, the British ruling class has succeeded in implementing the same strategy as its counterparts in other countries.

The development of the bourgeoisie's strategy

The situation is not static however. In various countries there have been examples, albeit generally small-scale, of outbreaks of workers beginning to challenge the unions, confirming that we have entered "a transition period where the potential for workers to become more conscious of the real role of the unions will increase." (WR 207). 'Bourgeoisie prepares its unions to confront outbreaks of class struggle'. The electricians' strike last November showed this tendency (see WR 210). At the same time the escalation of the crisis evident in the situation in Asia, can only compel the ruling class to increase their attacks on the working class still further. This makes it all the more necessary for the different parts of the bourgeoisie state to carry out their tasks as effectively as possible. The further distancing of the unions from the government has a central place in achieving this: attacks by the government reinforce the unions' image as the only defenders of the working class, while the strengthening of the unions' grip makes it easier to implement the attacks.

In recent months a number of steps have taken to achieve such a distancing:

- * The 'battle' over union recognition is the most significant, with the TUC soon to mount a poster campaign on "the right to be heard". This is an intelligent tactic since the fight for 'union rights' is a traditional rallying cry which can draw in many workers and allows leftists, both inside and outside the Labour Party, to make their particular contributions. It has the potential to be a broad-based

campaign. That it is a concoction brewed up jointly by the TUC and the CBI can be seen from the fact that at the start of December the two had agreed a deal on recognition but just over a week later the CBI came up with conditions unacceptable to the TUC. No less a bastion of the British ruling class than the *Financial Times* has implicitly confirmed this: "The CBI presents it as a key concern and floats the spectre of a return to the industrial relations problems of the 1970s. But for most large companies it would seem to be largely irrelevant since they fully recognise unionism and trade freely. According to the TUC, unions have collective bargaining rights in 44 of the top 50 companies" (18/2/98).

- * The question of recognition is itself only part of the wider debate around the forthcoming White Paper on 'fairness at work' with the TUC calling a special conference in early May.

- * The public sector pay round, where most workers will actually receive a pay cut because of the phasing in of the award, allowed several union leaders to make angry noises: "New Labour is behaving more savagely than its predecessor" (Doug McAvoy, NUT); "While millions of pounds are spent on parties for pop stars at No 10, reforming ministers are skimping and sacking old friends on foreign trips, lowly paid public sector employees are screwed to save the Treasury a few miserable pounds" (Nigel de Gruchy, NASUWT). "Britain's nurses will be angry and disappointed that the new government has failed to deliver decent deals for the professions" (Malcolm Wing, Unison). (All quoted in FT 30/1/98).

- * In preparation for the budget, the TUC's submission called for an additional £3.2bn to be spent on the least well off and for public spending to grow by at least 2.25% per year in real terms.
- * The TUC is also calling for a minimum wage

in excess of £4.00 per hour while the government has let it be known that it is opposed to anything more than £3.50 per hour.

The government for its part continues to demonstrate its 'tough' approach to the unions with the recent decision to maintain the ban on strike action by prison officers.

The balance of class forces
The evolution of the situation is bringing renewed confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie closer. But at present it is still at the level of the most fleeting skirmishes with the majority of the working class still bowed down under the weight of confusions about the unions, the virtues of democracy and the permanence of capitalism. It is in the evolution of the bourgeoisie's strategy that we can see the changes in the situation reflected most clearly. There was a time when the bourgeoisie felt able to dismiss the class struggle as a 'thing of the past'. Following that period they were concerned to set up large-scale manoeuvres against the working class. While this is still part of the strategy these manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie are no longer on the scale seen in France in 1995. This is because the bourgeoisie anticipates a real development of the workers' struggle. If during the last years the bourgeoisie has amassed a certain amount of credit to the unions, by building up the proletariat's trust in them, today it is moving to a situation where it will have to begin drawing on that credit. The developments we are currently witnessing amount to a deployment of the union maelstrom into more effective positions from which to counter the upsurge of the class struggle that the bourgeoisie itself now expects. *North, 25/2/98*

Labour softens its image - the better to attack the working class

It would appear that the hard-nosed Labour cabinet is bowing to growing public concern about its attacks on welfare spending. The government has let it be known that Prime Minister Tony Blair will announce an extra £1.5 to £2 billion for the NHS to mark its 50th anniversary. Labour now says that an 'independent appeals system' will be set up for the disabled who have their benefits taken away by the 'integrity test', while more money is to be spent on further education. These steps are a smokescreen to obscure ever-deepening attacks on the proletariat.

The centrepiece of this campaign on Labour's responsiveness to the needs of the poor, is the cut in lone parent benefit which, according to the Guardian of 25.2.98, will be restored to all poor parents with children in the budget. Hard on the heels of this came the announcement of a tax break of 75% of childcare costs for working parents earning less than £20,000. All of this has been hailed as a massive redistribution of wealth from rich to poor, as well as enabling parents to get off welfare and into work. These announcements, as yet unconfirmed, will not increase the rape by nurseries, childminders or jobs available.

These empty gestures may blow smoke in the workers' eyes for a while but the reality of the continued attacks is not easily hidden. The March budget is expected to formalise many of the draconian 'reforms' of the welfare system. We can rest assured that they will certainly not improve the situation of those claiming benefits.

The unemployed will suffer an intensification of the draconian attacks on them. Labour has already tightened up on those initiated by the Tories: the Job-Sekers Allowance is being very firmly applied, leading to hundreds of thousands losing benefits because after six months they are unable to claim the dole and they do not qualify for Income Support if their partners or their parents work. In order to avoid down spending even further, in November the government demanded that the rules on the payment of benefits to those who have taken out private unemployment insurance to cover mortgage payments should be fully applied. These rules, which have been in place since 1988, deduct the money paid by the

insurance policy from benefits if it is paid directly to the unemployed. If it is paid directly to the mortgage company, benefit is not cut. This measure alone could effect 3.5 million workers. The 'caring', 'sharing' government has also removed the right for the unemployed to take two weeks holiday a year without losing benefits. They have also placed a limit on the amount of illness which the unemployed can have and will claim benefits.

It has also been forecast that the budget will increase employment as a result of further state centralisation of the nation-wide drive to lower wages. Labour has already announced its New Deal for the young and long-term unemployed, which pays employers to take on unemployed at low wages in the name of 'employability'. In the budget, the state will add to this by reducing the amount of National Insurance that employers using cheap labour have to pay. It has also been speculated that a 10p basic income tax rate will be introduced, making it 'more attractive' for workers to take low paid jobs. This will not make a lot of difference to those on low pay, who will still struggle to scrape by.

Behind this apparent 'bonus' for the low paid is the brutal fist of the state, because with all these incentives to take low paid jobs and with the economy 'booming', there is no reason for workers to be jobless. The leaks about tax breaks for child care for poor families and the talk of a minimum wage fit neatly into this. Consequently, we can expect even more draconian measures to force people off the dole since they are obviously 'lay-about' and the 'work shy'.

Labour says that its Welfare to Work is based on the US system. A system, which makes clear what is yet to come. In the States welfare payments are limited to 5 years in a lifetime of worker and their family. Savage cuts have been made in benefits by the use of welfare etc.

As for the disabled, 65% of whom live below the poverty line, while Labour talks about 'independent' appeals, this has not altered the fact that millions of disabled and sick workers live in fear of losing their pitiful benefits after being put through the ordeal of having their claims for incapacity Benefits re-assessed and

the degrading humiliation of the state's sham medical tests, which are carried out to determine whether they are ill or not. There has been speculation in the media that the budget will axe such benefits - i.e. cut them.

Public sector workers have also enjoyed the fruits of New Labour by having their pay cut yet again. Not only is the pay rise below inflation, once again, but it is going to be introduced in two instalments, making it lower still. For example, qualified nurses will lose £170 while teachers will lose £270 from what they would get if the rise were paid in one go.

Workers cannot complain because *"The worst form of short-termism would be to pay ourselves more today at the cost of fewer jobs tomorrow and lower living standards in the very near future"* (Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, *The Guardian* 28.1.98). This same old line has been sold to public sector workers (and all workers) for the last 30 years. Millions of jobs have been lost and working class living standards have deteriorated to unprecedented levels. Since 1993, 250,000 jobs have gone in the public sector alone.

Ideological campaign of the Labour Left. The ruling class knows that the ideological smokescreen they have thrown up around the attacks is going to wear increasingly thin amongst the working class. Workers know what is happening in their jobs, have families members who are unemployed or are sick and disabled. In order to divert workers anger away from the real reason for these attacks the ruling class is giving the left of the Labour Party an increasingly important role. The Left does all it can to hide the real reason for cutting social spending: the crisis ridden nature of capitalism. Before Christmas 47 left wing Labour MPs voted against the government's attacks on single parent benefit; leading left-wingers, such as Ken Livingstone, are getting increasing media publicity for their 'criticism' of the attacks, while two left-wing MEPs, Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr, have split from the Labour Party to become independents, in 'protest' at the attacks. The left says that if the government only increased the taxes paid by the rich, more could be spent on the welfare

state. Thus, it is just a matter of reforming the system and all will be well.

This is a very dangerous lie. And a lie that is being reinforced by the Labour government's present show of responsiveness to criticism on lone parent benefit. Workers are seeing their already meagre health care, benefits and other services being attacked, so the ideas of the Left are very attractive. The reality is that the cause of the attacks is the economic crisis that has torn at capitalism world-wide for 30 years. It is a sign of the depth of the crisis that the bourgeoisie is having to dismantle the welfare state. The building of the welfare state after the war was an essential part of state capitalism's response to the needs of the Western bloc war machine. It brought every aspect of the proletariat's life under the control of the state with the aim of supplying cannon and factory fodder. This increase in capitalist state oppression of the working class was, and still is, sold by the left as a 'gain' for the working class.

In the coming months we will increasingly hear more of the Labour Left and their will to fight welfare reform 'tooth and nail'. In Parliament the likes of Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner will denounce New Labour and, no doubt, call for a 'socialist programme'. Workers cannot fall for this. In the 'good old days' of the welfare state workers only received very basic help, while those who worked for it received low wages and faced continual attacks on jobs and working conditions. If now, even those 'benefits' look better than the terrible conditions suffered today, it is because capitalism cannot afford to offer even the meagre sop it used to hold out to the working class. All the left is doing is calling on workers to support the capitalist state and to forget their own class interests: the defence of their working and living conditions against all attacks whether by the state, be it left or right, or by 'private' bosses. *Phil*

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LIVERPOOL
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Front Line Books, Newton Street, Piccadilly,

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Owl Books, Osilow Road, SO2 0TB

Public Meetings

Asian crisis heralds world recession

MANCHESTER
Sat. 7th March
2.30pm
Friends Meeting House,
Mount Street,
(off Albert Square)
Manchester

LONDON
Sat. 14th March
2.30pm
Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square,
Holborn,
London WC1

Open Meetings

The ICC also holds meetings without a specific presentation where any aspect of revolutionary politics can be discussed.

The next will be:
Sat. 18th April
2.30
Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square,
Holborn, London WC1

International Review 92

Economic crisis

From the crisis in Asia
to a new collapse of the world economy

Internationalist Perspective on the crisis

A new Oscar for political stupidity

ICC 12th Congress

Report on the Crisis

Campaigns against communism

The Great Lie:

“Communism=Stalinism=Nazism”

Moscow Conferences, 1997

A proletarian debate begins in Russia

The unidentified class:

Soviet Bureaucracy as seen by Leon Trotsky

6th Congress of the Partido Comunista Internacionalista

A step forward for the Communist Left

Bourgeoisie makes the working class pay

The damage caused by the tremors in Asian stock exchanges and money markets is far from finished. The ruling class is keeping very quiet about the unending, violent attacks in this stricken region. They give the lie to all the official talk of the 'bright' future ahead of us.

These massive attacks were already unfolding even before the earthquake in the Pacific Rim, even among the best performing of the Asian 'dragons'. Today, the situation has been made much worse by the extent of the crisis and the brutality of the austerity plans imposed by the situation itself and by the pressure of the IMF.

Collapse of the dragons, attacks on the working class in Asia

During the Mexican crisis of 1995, the attacks on the working class were slightly delayed. Today in Asia, whole sectors of the economy have collapsed and company bankruptcies have immediately brought with them millions of lay-offs. The tragedy has not hit the most vulnerable countries alone, since Japan and Korea have both been hit by the shock. The failure of a whole series of companies, and the decline of the Japanese banking sector have already thrown hundreds of thousands of workers onto the street. According to the boss of Samsung, "redundancies are necessary, *our survival depends on them*". And this is why the Korean parliament has decided to adopt a law to allow mass lay-offs. When unemployment was once 'non-existent', the government in Seoul has announced that 1.5 million workers will be affected. Even sectors not directly hit have been unable to escape the effects of the crisis. For example, Korean Air not only plans

redundancies, but has already lowered wages by 10%. Airasia has imposed unpaid holidays on 8,000 staff.

Other 'stars' of the region have also fallen to earth. In Hong Kong, major companies, banks, airlines (such as Cathay Pacific) have all announced job losses. Large retailers like the Japanese Yashua are bankrupt and shedding staff. In Thailand and Indonesia, the crisis is doing terrible damage. More than 2 million people have already lost their jobs in Jakarta, and the unions have forecast another 3 million redundancies for 1998. In the east of Java, riots broke out in January following the upsurge in food prices and the reduction in state subsidies, in particular on petrol and electricity. Supermarkets have been ransacked. The shanty-towns around the main cities have grown phenomenally. Similar bankruptcies are rife in Thailand. Hundreds of laid-off car workers have clashed with riot police. Doctors were injured. The ruling class has confronted these inevitable convulsions by exploiting the workers' low level of consciousness and inexperience to turn their anger onto the rotten ground of nationalism and xenophobia. The Thai government has announced the expulsion of 300,000 immigrant workers. Anti-Chinese propaganda has been revived, and ethnic and religious antagonisms stoked up. When we add the menace that looms over China, where millions of proletarians are to be sacrificed in the restructuring of the state sector, the imminent tremors in Eastern Europe and Latin America, we can begin to see the catastrophic extent that the dynamic of social chaos has taken on.

At the heart of the industrialised world, the aggravation of workers' conditions

Despite massive attacks and the increase of unemployment in the four corners of the earth, the bourgeoisie's ideological campaigns still dare to present the heart of the industrialised world as full of 'democratic' optimism and 'social' reform, in order to hide the utter bankruptcy of the capitalist system. Contrary to the claims of the media, the crisis in Asia is causing attacks of dramatic depth and intensity. Asian orders for manufactured goods have plummeted, and are directly plunging certain sectors and companies of the developed world into serious difficulty. Boeing, for example, has seen a serious fall in orders, since the Asian countries represent a third of its market world-wide. This enormous company is forced to cut 12,000 jobs. In the country of 'full employment', the hard disc manufacturer Seagate is also planning to cut 10,000 jobs. To that we can add 10,000 at Digital (computers), 3,000 at Black & Decker, 19,000 at A.T.K.T., etc. The strategy is simple. Lay off a stable workforce in order to employ (at best) cheaper and more compliant labour. The so-called 'Anglo-Saxon model' is in vogue today! In France, the Korean Daewoo has cancelled its investment in the Lorraine. In Britain, Hyundai has announced that it is freezing all construction work on a £2.5 billion semi-conductor plant in Wales. The exposure of German banks to Asian debt is already having serious effects: Deutsche Bank, the biggest in Europe, has announced 9,000 job losses. At Daimler-Benz, 150,000 workers are already facing 'early retirement', while another 200,000 jobs are to go in local govern-

ment in the Eastern Länder. Unemployment has already risen to the highest levels since the war, and will go on getting worse.

Falling production costs in Asia are already putting greater pressure on wages in the central countries, in particular through the '35-hour week' already in effect in several European countries, under discussion in others like Belgium, and due to be enforced in France and Italy by 2000. This policy amounts to 'job blackmail', and a reduction in wages. The bourgeoisie hopes that cuts in 'social' budgets and higher taxes will help it to compete in the commercial war (let us mention that the IMF will have to scrape the barrel for its 'rescue' funds). Reduction in working hours means increasing 'flexibility', in other words the precariousness of working conditions. Multiple employment and partial unemployment are becoming the norm. On every question, from education to employment, from health to pensions, austerity plans that dare not admit what they are continue to plunge the workers of the developed countries deeper into poverty.

If the ruling class stays so discreet about the measures it is getting together internationally, on the massive attacks falling on every sector, in every country, it is because it fears the questions the workers might ask about the bankruptcy of its system. This is why it maintains confusion and unleashes endless ideological campaigns. The proletariat cannot let itself be lulled by all this talk. Only in struggle can it forge its unity and its consciousness, the only weapons which will really spring the traps of the ruling class. Only thus can it develop its fight against capitalism. W

Critique conference opposes clarification

On February 14th, the ICC attended the 25th annual conference of a publication called "Critique", devoted to the question of "the failure of social-democracy". A strange title one might say, and only about 80-odd years out of date. So what is Critique, and what was the purpose of this conference?

The publication itself is a glossy and expensive review, whose inside cover informs us that "Critique is an independent, scholarly journal... Rejecting the concept of socialism in one country, and the possibility that a country could be both socialist and underdeveloped, it seeks to show that the problems of our time are governed by the necessity for democratic control over all aspects of society. The absence of democratic control leads to an inefficient, wasteful, and hierarchically structured economy, though in different ways according to the particular society (...)" [Critique V, fundamental endeavour is to develop Marxist method and political economy both in principle and through application". Its editors include Hillet Ticktin of Glasgow University, which runs a 'Centre for Socialist Theory and Movements', Bob Arnot of Glasgow Polytechnic, and Mick Cox of Queens University, Belfast. In fact, what we have here is an academic journal run, not by marxists, but by a bunch of Marxologists. And how could it be otherwise? Universities are an important part of the state's ideological apparatus and they are not going to backroll a revolutionary publication.

Superficially this may not be so obvious. The pages of Critique and the speakers at their conference are full of denunciations of social-democracy and Stalinism. But when we scratch a little beneath the surface, we find the same tired old 'theories' of traditional leftism, especially Trotskyism, polished up and given a new gloss. Here are some examples. The ex-USSR was not socialist, but then nor was the capitalist either. According to Critique, it represented a different form of society which is now trying to "enter the market". Stalinism "came into being in order to control the workers in the first place. In order to do so, it

had to find a form which used both force and persuasion" (no.23, our emphasis). As for social-democracy, if we listen to the speakers at the conference we hear on the one hand that "Social-democracy has not betrayed the working class, because it is bourgeois, but it has betrayed itself" (Cox), but then, on the other, that "Labour's goal of full employment shows the semi-working class nature of this party" (Ticktin).

We have not the space here to give a detailed account of the five targeted presentations, but those that we had to listen to. We can summarise the main ideas as follows: Firstly, Stalinism has completely failed and its bankruptcy is clear to all as a result of the collapse since 1989; secondly, Social-Democracy has 'betrayed itself', and has abandoned its traditional industrial policy in accepting the rules of the game of finance capital, as expressed in the phenomenon of globalisation. Is this a cause for demoralisation? For our professors, quite the contrary. "A space", they say, is opening up on the left. If "the Left" can learn from its mistakes and failures during the last decades, then it can only be in a good position to fill this space, and profit from the inevitable upsurge of working class resistance to a crisis which can only go on deepening.

It is in this idea of a 'space' to be filled, that we find the key to the real purpose of the meeting. In the present situation, the deepening of the crisis is certainly posing the possibility of an upsurge in the class struggle while for a small minority, the question of the ultimate goal of that struggle is also being posed. This minority, comprised of politicians and elements searching for genuine revolutionary class positions, represents a potential strengthening of the revolutionary forces of the working class. It is fairly obvious that the ruling class is not just going to sit back and let this happen. On the contrary, it aims to combat the threat posed by the working class at all levels. Against the class struggle it deploys its trade unions first and foremost, while also attacking the proletariat's consciousness with campaigns

slandering its revolutionary history and potential. It offers a paean of false 'oppositions', while seeking to bury the genuine revolutionary expressions of the working class, embodied in the organisations of the Communist Left, under a heap of lies and insults. Critique finds its niche within this part of the offensive. One of the main strategies is the attempt to sow confusion about what the 'left' really is and, in particular, to present the left of capitalism as though it were revolutionary. Critique's statement quoted above tries to make out that "the necessity for democratic control" rather than proletarian revolution is the solution to society's ills.

The conference gave official status to a dispute between. On the one hand there was "Workers' Fight", the English subsidiary of the French Trotskyist group *Lutte Ouvrière* - an organisation that has supported Mitterand's Socialist Party in every election since the 1970s, that defended the USSR as a 'degenerated workers' state' right up to its collapse, and that has consistently participated with its Stalinist chums of the French CP in the sabotage of the class struggle in France. On the other there were *Radical Chaire and Aufheben*, groups which like to present themselves as genuine 'communists', and who would denounce the anti-working class nature of Stalinism at the drop of a hat. These latter groups specialise in promoting a 'new' revolutionary movement, in opposition to the 'sectarian', 'out-dated' Communist Left. In practice they provide a radical gloss to bourgeois single-issue campaigns, like the anti-racism movement, while publishing the Communist Left's as in the *Radical Chaire* meeting. Beyond Kroustail, reported in NR 211.

Critique's particular role is to act as a link between such apparently different groups, drawing together their various efforts to denounce the interests of the bourgeoisie, in particular by lending its 'scholarly' and 'independent' weight to the pretence that they are genuine expressions of the working class. It

debate on the 'failure of social democracy' was an important clarification within the workers' movement. But it was closed many decades ago. If Critique has chosen to revive it now, it is not because it has anything worth saying (as the speakers at the conferences showed) but to deliberately use it against the advancement of consciousness in the working class.

The ICC intervened to cut through this confusion and expose these enemies of the working class. Together with the Communist Workers Organisation, the other major organisation of the Communist Left with a presence in Britain, that also took part in the meeting, we defended the absolute necessity of clearly defining the class line that separates organisations of the working class from those of the ruling class. If we are to talk of the "betrayal" of social-democracy, then the only "betrayal" which has any meaning as far as the working class is concerned is the betrayal of 1914, when the social-democratic parties supported the imperialist war and did so passed over to the enemy camp. Since then, they have never been anything but an arm of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. Stalinism, for its part, was the instrument of the counter-revolution in Russia and represented the interests of Russian imperialism in the war of 1939, while Trotskyism chose the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. The left that Critique gathers under its 'critical' umbrella, is only the extreme left of capitalism and, far from having anything to offer the proletariat, is its most dangerous enemy.

There is only one current that has stood firm on the defence of the working class since the defeat of the world revolutionary wave in the 1920s: the current of the Communist Left: the Dutch, German, Italian and French Lefts and their modern heirs. The line between the Communist Left and the left of capital is a line drawn in workers' blood shed in countless struggles and world war. To attempt to deny that line, as Critique and its accomplices do, is to do essential work for the bourgeoisie. W

Trotskyists fuel pacifist illusions

The threat of more bombing of civilians in Iraq by the US and Britain is a reality - even if it has been temporarily averted - exposes again the barbaric irrationality of capitalism and its attempts to offer a perspective other than endless suffering to billions around the world. The development of military chaos in the Middle East has awakened the working class a consciousness of the necessity to overthrow decadent capitalism, its rule is endemic, and create a communist society.

Revolutionary organisations must play a vanguard role in the struggle to expose wars which imperialism tries to hide its murder and destruction. They must also show the working class that the defence of its own immediate interests against the attempts of the bourgeoisie to make it pay for war, a defence that is also a precondition for achieving the ultimate goal of the class struggle.

The bourgeoisie doesn't passively allow the world situation to open the eyes of the proletariat nor does it leave the revolutionary organisation a free field within which it can intervene. Not only does it use the official media to repeatedly mystify the causes and objectives of its military adventures, but it also has a spectrum of left wing forces to distract the emergence of class consciousness in order to ensure the passivity of the proletariat and, if necessary, mobilise it behind the banners of nationalism. Of these forces the most hypocritical apologists for imperialism war are the leftists of Trotskyist origin who falsely claim to represent international socialism and proletarian revolution.

Reinforcing pacifist illusions.
"Don't let them do this again", "No to war in the Gulf", "No blood for oil", "Don't bomb Iraq", "We're not warlike" have been the slogans of the Socialist Workers Party. At first sight they might seem valid. But these slogans deliberately leave out who is to achieve them and how. They leave in confusion exactly what should be clarified: that only the working class by overthrowing the entire apparatus of imperialism can bring about peace. No fraction of the bourgeoisie can: because its system is war. This ambiguity of

Continued from page 1 Imperialist conflicts behind the Gulf crisis

Arab countries attended the Islamic conference in Iran - a country which the USA defines as a terrorist state - and the refusal to open the established links with some of America's principal rivals, especially Germany. The reason that the US has been so concerned in the Middle East would open the door to other great powers was shown very graphically in 1967 when the Russian diplomatic strategy stepped in to avert a clash with Iraq over the explosion of the American component of the UN weapons inspection.

Faced with this growing challenge, the USA decided to respond to Saddam's most recent provocation - the historic visit to the presidential palaces to the UN inspection team - with an enormous deployment of military force. The threat of a nuclear war was made that would be much closer to the holocaust of '91 than to the damp squibs of 1994 and 1996. The US was warning of a new war, a new war since '91 has been demonstrated very openly by its inability to mobilise the other great powers, not to mention the Soviet Union, in the Middle East, in support of this operation. China and Russia were strongly opposed to any military intervention. The US was also aware that the major Arab powers, including the great powers, including the most recalcitrant ones, had been mobilised behind the US. At that point, Saddam Hussein was fully committed to the annexation of Kuwait and could not afford to retreat. In the recent crisis, Saddam was also in a very difficult position: he could afford to negotiate and make concessions about weapons inspections without losing face. In fact, in contrast to '91, the

the leftists in front of the workers' illusions is deliberate: such slogans are supposed to be *transitional* - encouraging the working class to act on its present illusions in the peaceful intentions of its exploiters - in order to go through negative experiences and thus reach, in the mythical future, revolutionary conclusions.

The Trotskyist movement which puts forward such slogans abandoned internationalism with its support of Allied imperialism in the Second World War (1). Ever since, they have played a significant role for the bourgeoisie by stilling the workers' pacifist illusions in order to prevent revolutionary conclusions being drawn and to mobilise them for imperialist war.

With their radical sounding noise the leftists try to drown out any revolutionary logic. According to them, the imperialists can be forced to see reason and be pacified. What's more, the warmongers can be persuaded to turn their words into ploughshares, and respect human life instead of profits. The vast arms industry and military sector, it would seem, can be transformed into education and health services.

The Marxist left in the First World War took up the slogan "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war", leaving no doubt that peace could only come through revolution. They denounced the slogan of the pacifist wing of the bourgeoisie as do revolutionaries today. In contrast leftists actively encourage these illusions.

Mobilising workers behind the left wing of imperialism.
The SWP tells workers to join protests, demonstrations and rallies for 'peace', organised by the Labour Party left, by the trade unions and CND. They provide two illusions for the price of one. Firstly there's the idea that through the democratic facade of parliament and its parties you really can influence imperialist militarism. Secondly there's the lie that the left of the bourgeoisie, of the government party itself, is not as murderous as the right and so should be supported, as though imperialism was merely a result of a mistaken policy rather than the life-blood of capitalism.

If they went ahead, Japan and Germany, as is their wont, have been more discreet; but Japan announced that they would not give any financial support to the military operations in the Gulf (as it was forced to do in '91) and Chancellor Kohl made a point of reviving US representatives, sent to Europe to condemn Iraq, that the US had supported Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war. The majority of the Arab states either refused to associate themselves with America's military build-up, or, if it was too difficult to resist US pressure, as in the case of Kuwait, made plain their lack of enthusiasm.

Of all the great powers Britain alone has stood shoulder to shoulder with the US in this crisis. But this has been for contingent reasons. Britain doesn't have the same ties with the Baghdad regime that France does, and made it clear that its position on the Gulf situation is motivated above all by Britain's national interests. The much-hyped love affair between Clinton and Blair does not mean that the historic rift between the US and Britain has been overcome.

We were thus in a very different situation from the one which prevailed in 1991, when the US was in complete control of events. The invasion of Kuwait, a trap laid for Saddam by the US who gave him the 'green light' to march in, provided a much more tangible pretext for military intervention than the current saga of the regional palaces. The US had all the 'legitimacy' it needed to unleash Operation Desert Storm, in the name of an alliance with the regional palaces. The US had all the great powers, including the most recalcitrant ones, had been mobilised behind the US. At that point, Saddam Hussein was fully committed to the annexation of Kuwait and could not afford to retreat. In the recent crisis, Saddam was also in a very difficult position: he could afford to negotiate and make concessions about weapons inspections without losing face. In fact, in contrast to '91, the

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Historically the role of pacifism, espoused by left wing social democrats and liberals before the First and Second World Wars (and in other imperialist wars), is not to disarm capitalism but the working class. Demanding that workers line up behind them is to ask that they walk into a deliberate trap.

Of course the SWP is critical of the Labour left and their support for the United Nations, for sanctions and for diplomacy. But such critical support only makes the pacifist illusions and campaigning they propose all the more attractive and radical sounding. In addition, they have given the impression that a handful of minor pacifist demonstrations changed the direction of US imperialism. "Bill Clinton and Tony Blair were shaken last week by the scale of opposition to their war drive in the Middle East. Clinton's administration was thrown on the defensive... " (Socialist Worker 28/2/98). They were supposedly "shaken" by 200 protesters in Chicago, 500 in Boston, 50 in Minneapolis, a "town hall" meeting in Columbus, Ohio and uncounted demonstrations on marches in New York and San Francisco. A similar scale of "opposition" was reported in Britain. The SWP seriously expects its readers to believe that imperialism has been "shaken" by such pacifist protest!

From pacifism... to imperialism
Leftist pacifism, like all pacifism, is doubly hypocritical. The pacifism of the leftists in Britain is linked to their critical support for Iraq imperialism against US and British imperialism. In Britain workers should 'oppose' war, in Iraq support it.

In the leftist world view, despite the domination by imperialism of every corner of the planet, oppressed nations can supposedly liberate themselves and weaken imperialism and therefore should be supported. Iraq, despite its obviously predatory imperialist appetites is put in this category by the leftists and is therefore eligible for proletarian sacrifices. While the SWP might be relatively subtle in saying this, a group like the Workers Power come straight out with it: "The Iraqi people have every right to resist a military onslaught. Internationalists should stand with Iraq against imperialist aggression: it is the job of the Iraqi

people, not US hangers, to get rid of Saddam" (WP February 1998). But how are the "Iraqi people" to get rid of Saddam if they have let themselves be mobilised to die in the defence of the Iraqi bourgeoisie?

In the 21 February issue of *Socialist Worker*, an article on the 1968 Tet offensive of the North Vietnamese against the US reminds us that the leftist's selling of worker's blood for imperialism is not new. Supposedly Tet showed us that: "A small peasant country was able to defeat the mightiest military power in the world". In fact, it only tells us that the task of the leftists is to hide the real nature of imperialism, the better to mobilise workers for one side in the blood bath. North Vietnam was a satellite of the Russian imperialist bloc. The retreat of the US from Vietnam was in fact a stepping stone towards US encirclement and ultimate defeat of the Soviet Bloc in 1989. Not a weakening of imperialism then but a shift in its balance of forces.

Only the working class, through a determined revolutionary struggle, can 'weaken' imperialism, prior to eliminating it all together, otherwise there can only be a realignment of imperialist forces to the detriment of this struggle.

The task of revolutionaries is to remain true to the internationalist principles of the working class, even when, like the Communist Left during the thirties and forties, it is isolated or persecuted. Only if revolutionaries defend this heritage will the working class be able to find its bearings in the military chaos that is developing today.

The leftists pretend to believe that only socialism can bring about peace. But like the social chameleons of the First World War their 'socialism' is empty decoration for their speeches. Their real activity is to act as radical apologists for the pacifist recuperators of proletarian consciousness, and as recruiters for the imperialist camp in which the proletarian can die for the interests of its class enemy. **Com 24.2.98**

1) World Revolution 21, December 1978: "Trotskyism and WW2: In defence of imperialist war".
America's failure to go ahead with the military option was the direct result of its inability to rally the other imperialist powers behind it, and of the recognition that the use of force would only increase its lack of 'international support'. The resort to diplomacy was merely making the best of a bad job. It's a 'solution' that presents a number of inconveniences, not least that Saddam has emerged out of this crisis with a much improved image, both at home throughout the Middle East, as 'the only Arab leader who can stand up to the US'. He has shown that it pays to exploit the differences between the great powers, and that they encourage others to follow his example. More generally, the US may be stinging the 'virtues of diplomacy back by the threat of force, but its difficulties in actually carrying out this threat can only expose its weaknesses and so embolden all those who seek to put its world hegemony into question.
And that, paradoxical though it might seem, is precisely why America cannot renounce the military option, even if, as Albritton threatened the moment the Annsal deal was announced, it meant 'going it alone'. Though it has approved the deal, the US was quick to point out that any further infringement by Saddam would bring automatic military strikes; and this hanging threat will be backed up by a more or less permanent US presence in the Gulf.
Military action has only been postponed. And the more it is postponed, the more pressing the need for it, the bigger the deployment of force required. Because in the meantime, the revolution of the USA's weakness will only encourage the imperialist ambitions of its rivals, accelerate the flight into 'every man for himself'. Whether or not the next target is Saddam, capitalism's drive towards militarism and war cannot be halted - except by the international proletarian revolution. **Amos**

the leftists in front of the workers' illusions is deliberate: such slogans are supposed to be *transitional* - encouraging the working class to act on its present illusions in the peaceful intentions of its exploiters - in order to go through negative experiences and thus reach, in the mythical future, revolutionary conclusions.

The Trotskyist movement which puts forward such slogans abandoned internationalism with its support of Allied imperialism in the Second World War (1). Ever since, they have played a significant role for the bourgeoisie by stilling the workers' pacifist illusions in order to prevent revolutionary conclusions being drawn and to mobilise them for imperialist war.

With their radical sounding noise the leftists try to drown out any revolutionary logic. According to them, the imperialists can be forced to see reason and be pacified. What's more, the warmongers can be persuaded to turn their words into ploughshares, and respect human life instead of profits. The vast arms industry and military sector, it would seem, can be transformed into education and health services.

The Marxist left in the First World War took up the slogan "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war", leaving no doubt that peace could only come through revolution. They denounced the slogan of the pacifist wing of the bourgeoisie as do revolutionaries today. In contrast leftists actively encourage these illusions.

Mobilising workers behind the left wing of imperialism.
The SWP tells workers to join protests, demonstrations and rallies for 'peace', organised by the Labour Party left, by the trade unions and CND. They provide two illusions for the price of one. Firstly there's the idea that through the democratic facade of parliament and its parties you really can influence imperialist militarism. Secondly there's the lie that the left of the bourgeoisie, of the government party itself, is not as murderous as the right and so should be supported, as though imperialism was merely a result of a mistaken policy rather than the life-blood of capitalism.

If they went ahead, Japan and Germany, as is their wont, have been more discreet; but Japan announced that they would not give any financial support to the military operations in the Gulf (as it was forced to do in '91) and Chancellor Kohl made a point of reviving US representatives, sent to Europe to condemn Iraq, that the US had supported Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war. The majority of the Arab states either refused to associate themselves with America's military build-up, or, if it was too difficult to resist US pressure, as in the case of Kuwait, made plain their lack of enthusiasm.

Of all the great powers Britain alone has stood shoulder to shoulder with the US in this crisis. But this has been for contingent reasons. Britain doesn't have the same ties with the Baghdad regime that France does, and made it clear that its position on the Gulf situation is motivated above all by Britain's national interests. The much-hyped love affair between Clinton and Blair does not mean that the historic rift between the US and Britain has been overcome.

We were thus in a very different situation from the one which prevailed in 1991, when the US was in complete control of events. The invasion of Kuwait, a trap laid for Saddam by the US who gave him the 'green light' to march in, provided a much more tangible pretext for military intervention than the current saga of the regional palaces. The US had all the 'legitimacy' it needed to unleash Operation Desert Storm, in the name of an alliance with the regional palaces. The US had all the great powers, including the most recalcitrant ones, had been mobilised behind the US. At that point, Saddam Hussein was fully committed to the annexation of Kuwait and could not afford to retreat. In the recent crisis, Saddam was also in a very difficult position: he could afford to negotiate and make concessions about weapons inspections without losing face. In fact, in contrast to '91, the



The need for clarity on the union question

of the Bordist groups, almost never acknowledging the existence of other groups in the proletarian camp. So far, all efforts by the ICC in Britain to establish minimal contact with *Communist Left* have been ignored. But as we shall show in future articles, there are signs that other Bordist groups are beginning to move away from their traditional sectarian isolation, and we have no doubt that even *Il Partito/Communist Left* will eventually be affected by this movement. We thus call on the comrades of *Communist Left* to make public response to this article.

Continued from page 8

The Communist Manifesto of 1848: Fundamental weapon of the workers' struggle against capitalism

working class to set up its own political rule - the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as it was referred to in other writings of the same period.

Equally valid to this day is the prospect of the withering away of the state. Political power and the state were only a necessary evil in a society divided into classes, since the proletariat had no interest in forming itself into a new exploiting class, but was compelled to fight for the abolition of all class divisions. It followed that the advent of communism meant the end of politics as a particular sphere, and the end of the state. *As the Manifesto* puts it: "where in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by force of circumstance, to organise itself as a class; if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, exerts sway by force the old conditions of production, then, it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class".

Proletarian internationalism
 "The workers have no country. You cannot take away from them what they do not have." For 150 years loyalty to the principle of proletarian internationalism and the slogan on which the *Manifesto* concludes - "workers of the world unite!" - has been the most decisive criterion for judging whether the parties that claim to belong to the proletarian camp actually do belong to it, just as the abandonment of internationalism has always signalled a betrayal from which no return is possible. Even if, at the time of the *Manifesto*, marxism could still support certain national movements as expressions of the struggle of a still progressive bourgeoisie against feudal absolutism, Marx and Engels were unambiguous about the bourgeois character of such movements and about the fundamental antagonism between the national framework and the revolutionary programme of the proletariat. The *Manifesto* insists that "united action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat". *The Principles of Communism* are even more explicit about this: "the communist revolution will not merely be a national phenomenon but must take place simultaneously in all civilised countries, that is to say, at least in England, America, France and Germany. It is a universal revolution and will have a universal range".

The idea that communism, or even the revolutionary seizure of power, could become a reality within the confines of a single country, was as far from the minds of Marx and Engels as it was from the minds of the Bolsheviks who led the October revolution in 1917, and of the internationalist fractions who led the resistance to the Stalinist counter-revolution, which encapsulated itself precisely in the monstrous theory of "socialism in one country".

Marx and Lenin against Stalin
 Against the Stalinist lies (and against the lies of those repentant ex-Stalinists who have now become knights in the battle against communism) which claim that the *Manifesto* provides a Marxist legitimacy to the state capitalist regimes in the USSR and elsewhere, it is necessary to say loud and clear that Stalinism has for ever levelled beneath the negation of the general principles of the *Manifesto*, which for 150 years has been the doctrinal body of the workers' movement.

What connection is there between communism, defined in the *Manifesto* as "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all", and the Stalinist regimes of terror and super-

exploitation? Only one of total opposition. "In bourgeois society, living labour is no more than a means to increase accumulated labour. In communist society, the accumulated labour is no more than a means to widen, enrich and embellish the existence of those who work". This definition by Marx and Engels goes completely against the ferocious exploitation of the proletariat on the altar of the accumulation of Russian capital and its imperialist war effort. The concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state - which the Stalinists and Trotskyists claim is the practical application of the *Manifesto*'s formulae against bourgeois property - has never put into question "this wretched mode of appropriation which ensures that the worker lives only to increase capital and according to the interests of the ruling class", and in which "the immense majority are deprived of any property".

Where is the dictatorship of the proletariat, is the class of producers, which constitutes the majority of society, raising itself to the position of ruling class, in the Stalinist system in which the proletarians are crushed under the heel of a class of all-powerful, idle bourgeois bureaucrats? What connection is there between the withering away of the state foreseen by Marx as a result of the disappearance of classes, and the Moloch of a bureaucratic police state set up by Stalin and his emulators?

Finally, what connection is there between the internationalist rallying cry which concludes the *Manifesto* and the theory of "socialism in one country" which served to justify capitalist exploitation and militarism in the name of defending the "socialist fatherland"? Only a river of blood.

But at a time when the bourgeoisie is making a hue and cry about the so-called "crimes of communism", there are among its paid intellectuals certain more subtle ideologues who seek to set Marx against Lenin, by claiming that the Bolsheviks went outside Marx's teachings in daring to put themselves at the head of the proletarian revolution of 1917. Such people claim to be the "defenders" of marxism and even of "the ideal of communism" the better to sell the lie that Stalin was the continuer of Lenin and to attack the perspective of the proletarian revolution. They look for legitimacy in the likes of Kautsky, who in 1917 also spoke against the October revolution in the name of a so-called marxist orthodoxy, which was in fact inherited from the opportunist and reformist gangrene that had taken hold of large parts of the workers' movement at the end of last century. An "orthodoxy" which, today as yesterday, seeks to turn Marx into a harmless icon and calls on the workers to renounce any "revolutionary" utopia with a passion in direct proportion to their fear of the proletarian revolution.

Proletarian October in 1917 was not only the complete confirmation of the class confrontation foreseen by Marx and Engels in 1848, but the most consistent application of the programme of the *Manifesto*: the necessity for the violent overthrow of the bourgeois order faced with the bankruptcy of its mode of production; the affirmation of the dictatorship of the proletariat through its workers' councils; and all this in the firm framework of proletarian internationalism, which recognises the necessarily international character of the proletarian revolution. This red thread which connects Marx to Lenin and the Communist League to the Third International, which was carried on after the failure of the 1917-23 revolutionary wave by the left fractions of the Communist International and today's groups of the communist left, this is the thread that the bourgeoisie wants to cut at any price. Because the perspective posed to humanity 150 years ago remains just as relevant today.

"Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win". PW (See our series in the *International Review*, "Communism is not a nice ideal but a material necessity", in particular numbers 68-72

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Fundamental weapon of the workers' struggle against capitalism

In February 1848 in London, the first edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* was published in German. 150 years later when the ruling class is using the vast resources of its media to smother the living experience of October 1917 and to excoriate the spectre of the proletarian revolution, this small pamphlet written by Marx and Engels as the programme of the Communist League has lost none of its historical significance or its relevance. It remains the backbone of the proletarian's revolutionary theory, the founding text of the workers' movement, both in its affirmation of the goals of communism and of the means to reach them. The penetrating way that the *Manifesto* exposes the mortal contradictions which would ultimately spell capitalism's doom, the intransigence of the principles it develops, make it more than ever an indispensable weapon for the accomplishment of the historic tasks of the working class.

"The theoretical conclusions of the communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes" (Communist Manifesto).

The writing of the *Communist Manifesto* corresponded to a decisive moment in the history of the class struggle. A moment in which the class which carried within itself the communist project, the proletariat, began to form itself into an independent class within society. As the proletariat developed its own struggle for the improvement of its living conditions, communism came to be an abstract ideal elaborated by utopian currents and became a practical social movement leading to the abolition of class society and the creation of an authentic human community. At the time that the *Manifesto* was written, the workers' movement was starting to detach itself from the idealist and humanitarian vision of currents such as those of Weitling and Proudhon (1). It was not by chance that the first edition of the *Manifesto* appeared only a few months before the June days in Paris, in which the proletariat demonstrated itself from the bourgeoisie by waging its own combat independent from and against the bourgeois class, whereas beforehand it had still been caught up in the national bourgeois revolution in Europe, or in the machine-breaking movements that had characterised the first stumbling steps of the workers' movement. In this sense, it was the development of the proletariat as a class and

the maturation of its consciousness which produced the *Manifesto*, in the revolutionary programme of the proletariat, and not the other way around. It was the proletariat which won Marx to communism and not the genius of Marx which discovered the objective communist society on behalf of the class.

The method of historical materialism The affirmation in the opening paragraph that *"the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle"* makes the *Communist Manifesto* (as well as its immediate precursor, *The Principles of Communism*) the first detailed statement of position of scientific communism and of the historical materialist method. Describing the different changes in the relationship between classes and the historical evolution from ancient society through feudalism to capitalism, marxism showed that *"the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and exchange"*. Refraining from any abstract moral condemnation of the rise of capitalist exploitation, the text underlines the eminently revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie, which had swept aside all the old, narrow feudal forms of society and replaced them with the most dynamic and expansive mode of production ever seen: a mode of production which, by conquering and unifying the planet so rapidly, and by setting in motion such enormous productive forces, was laying the bases for a higher form of society which would finally be capable of doing away with class antagonisms. Equally devoid of subjectivism was the identification of the internal contradictions which would lead to the fall of capitalism: *"For many a decade past, the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodic return put on trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity - the epidemic of overproduction. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation, had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too*

much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce". The economic convulsions of world capitalism over the past thirty years, the result of its mortal crisis of overproduction, were essentially forecast by the *Communist Manifesto*. *"Not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called forth into existence the men who are to wield those weapons - the modern working class, the proletariat"*. Thus the *Manifesto* exposes the second fundamental contradiction leading to the overthrow of capitalist society: the contradiction between capital and labour. It shows why and how the proletariat is the first class in history to be at one and the same time an exploited class and a revolutionary class, the class whose historic task is abolish not simply bourgeois society but all class divisions, all social exploitation.

Role and necessity of the party The *Communist Manifesto* is however much more than an exposé of the theoretical conceptions elaborated by Marx and Engels, and of the historical materialist method (which had already been put forward in previous works). It was above all the manifest and collective expression of the proletariat, which was thereby arming itself with a political organisation and a programme.

With regard to the principles that define the role of this political vanguard and its relationship with the proletariat as a whole, the broad lines laid down in the *Manifesto* have been richly confirmed and amplified by the subsequent experience of the workers' movement: *"The communists have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole"*.

In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

"The communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all the others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement".

These formulas are the basis of the marxist conception of the role of the vanguard organi-

sations of the working class. Rejecting any idea of a communist consciousness that comes from 'outside' the proletariat, marxism affirmed from the start that it is from the proletariat as a class, and from its position in bourgeois society and from its moral movement, that there emanates the consciousness of the necessity for the communist revolution. It is thus the proletariat itself which gives rise to communist organisations and parties. The latter, however, are not simply reflections of this movement. They distinguish themselves through their determination and their grasp of the conditions and aims of the movement. They are an active and decisive factor in the proletariat's accomplishment of its historical tasks.

From the dictatorship of the proletariat to the withering away of the state The *Manifesto* predicts that the proletariat will be pushed towards revolution by growing economic misery and through a *"more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where they war breaks out into open revolution and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat"*. Inevitably though, the details of the way in which the proletariat would overthrow the bourgeoisie remained vague at the time. This was a text written prior to the first open appearance of the class as an independent force, and here and there we can find in the *Manifesto* the idea that the proletariat could use bourgeois democracy to make itself the ruling class. It was necessary to wait, above all, for the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, which demonstrated the necessity for the proletariat to create its own organs of political power and to destroy the bourgeois state rather than capture it, whether violently or 'democratically'. Indeed, in Engels' later introduction to the *Manifesto*, this was the most important alteration that historical experience had brought to the communist programme: *"In view of the practical experience gained, first in the February revolution, and then, first in the February revolution, and then, first in the February revolution, where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole months, this programme has in some details become antiquated. One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz. that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the read-made state machine and wield it for its own purposes'"*.

But what remains valid in the *Manifesto* is the affirmation of the violent nature of the seizure of power and of the need for the

Continued on page 7

Political positions of the ICC

World Revolution is a section in Britain of the International Communist Current which defends the following political position:

- Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.
- The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary way which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-20, doomed the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was born as the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravest error.
- The national regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc. and were called 'socialist' or 'communist' were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.
- Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in the international arena. These wars bring nothing to human-

- ity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.
- All the nationalist ideologies - 'national independence', 'the right of nations to self-determination' etc. - whatever their pretence, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and of their exploiters.
- In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only result in the fact that these elections are a real choice for the exploited. 'Democracy', a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Bonapartism and Fascism.
- All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called 'workers', 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties (now ex-Communist), the so-called organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Marxists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of 'popular fronts', 'anti-fascist fronts' and 'united fronts', which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.
- With the disintegration of capitalism, the workers everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union organisation, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.
- In order to advance in combat, the working class has to

- unity its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.
- Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by individual initiative, it is organised opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.
- The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.
- The communist transformation of society of the working class and of the masses that is not mass 'self-management' or the nationalisation of the economy. Communist requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, the market. It demands the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.
- The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is not to 'organise the working class' nor

- to 'take power' in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, to win workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat's combat.
- OUR ACTIVITY Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its goals and its immediate conditions. Organised intervention, united and centred on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat. The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

OUR ORIGINS The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experience of the working class and of the lessons that the proletariat organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the constructive contributions of the *Communist League of Marx and Engels* (1847-52), the *International Workers' Association* (the *International Workers' Association*, 1864-72), the *Communist International*, 1884-1914, the *Communist International*, 1919-20, the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International and in the years 1920-30, in particular the German, Dutch and Italian Lefts.